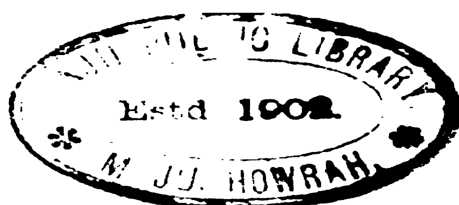
# Matilda, Countess of Tuscany





*Matilda, Countess of Tuscany*

# Matilda, Countess of Tuscany

By

Mrs Mary E. Huddy

*With Four Photogravure Plates from Drawings by* George M. Sullivan




*NEW AND REVISED EDITION*

London
John Long, Limited
Norris Street, Haymarket
1910

"J'AI observé avec le plus grand soin de ne rien insérer dans ce recueil qui ne fût parfaitement conforme à la vérité, autant que j'aie pu la connoître. Il est vrai que j'ai entremêlé, dans mon récit certains faits vraisemblables dont j'aurois peine à garantir toute l'authenticité, mais j'ai eu la précaution de me servir pour en faire la narration, de termes qui les feront assez reconnoître, comme par exemple : on dit, il est vraisemblable, il est probable, il est à présumer et autres expressions de cette nature."

J. D. NICOLE.

To

MY DEAR FRIEND

E. L.

## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER I



### CHAPTER II



### CHAPTER III

## Contents

### CHAPTER IV



### CHAPTER V



### CHAPTER VI

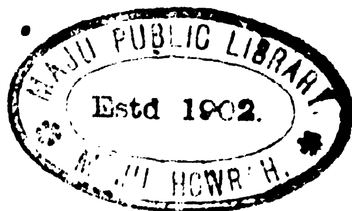
# Contents

# Contents

PAGE

# Contents

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS



# Matilda, Countess of Tuscany

## CHAPTER I

"We need another Hildebrand to shake
And purify us like a mighty wind."
H. W. Longfellow.

In the year 962 the German Emperor, Otto the Great, who had married Adelaide, widow of Lothair, King of Italy, was, by the elective voice of the Roman nobles and patricians, chosen as their King. From that time, therefore, the Italian dynasty was ended. Henceforth the country knew no other sovereigns than German princes who, following the policy of Charlemagne, treated the kingdom as a conquered province. On their coronation at Rome they assumed the imperial dignity, and, as historians assure us, "made repeated but ineffectual attempts to revive the ancient laws and customs of the city."

Under the title of "Pontifex Maximus," or "Upholder of Ecclesiastical Rights," they constituted themselves "Defenders of the Church" against all men, although they thought lightly of violating her authority when it was pronounced against them.

The closing of the tenth century, however, became the epoch of a marked change in the constitution of Italy. In the north, Lombardy, headed by Milan, became to a certain degree independent, though still more or less swayed by the Imperial Court.

Other important cities, including Rome, threw off

allegiance to the Emperor, and having thus asserted their independence, "passed under the control of the people themselves, who made and repealed their own laws as necessity or caprice dictated." Those living in the other provinces, such as the extensive marquisate of Tuscany, which afterwards formed the nucleus of the Republics of Florence, Lucca, Pisa and Sienna, were content to commit the reins of government to abler hands than those of the populace. "The cities of Tuscany," remarks the historian, "are placed as rocks in the subsidiary waste of unsettled power."

Their rulers were, for the most part, native princes, who, under the various titles of Margraves, Dukes, Counts, etc., domineered over the towns and cities which comprised their principalities without any protest from the inhabitants. Probably this despotism would not have been tolerated had it not been tempered by a gracious condescension which secured the ready obedience and loyalty of the willing vassals.

These dignitaries, independent of each other and of Germany, were, in point of fact, so many petty sovereigns whose power became both absolute and hereditary.

They not only imposed taxes upon their subjects, but exacted labour from them without remuneration, and not infrequently demanded their time and strength in carrying out works of defence or utility.

In return for this forced service the Castle doors were open to relieve the needy. The ladies of the household voluntarily undertook to care for the sick peasants, for whom they prepared medicines and nourishing food with their own hands. In addition to this personal assistance and sympathy, the tyranny of the princes was further mitigated by the erection and endowment of monasteries which afforded sustenance and shelter for the aged and infirm.

Military service was required at the hands of the vassals whenever their lords were disposed to enter upon the war-

path in order to acquire fresh territory, or to repel the incursions of native or foreign princes.

At the same time it must be confessed the Margraves constituted themselves the recognised protectors of their dependants, and were ever ready to take their part against the attacks and annoyances of their jealous neighbours.

Amongst those most to be feared were the Normans, who about this period began to acquire considerable territory in Italy, and whose mailed hand fell heavily upon the natives whose land they appropriated.

A band composed of forty of these valiant sons of Mars had on their return from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land proceeded by way of the Tyrrhenian Sea and landed at Salerno. The inhabitants of that city were engaged at the time in resisting with varying success the attacks of a horde of Saracens who came in vast numbers and over-ran most of the southern portion of Italy.

The Normans offered their services to the citizens, and with that daring which is associated with their name drove back the infidels and settled as allies in the country they had so gallantly rescued. By conquest and frequent annexations these enterprising settlers gradually but surely extended their territories until they formed themselves into a number of self-controlled and formidable colonies. These provinces at a later date were recognised as fiefs of the Church and held in trust for the Pontiffs, whose temporal power was thereby considerably augmented. The Holy See, however, though thus aided by the secular arm, was not yet sufficiently strong to resist the imperial control of the tiara. Unfortunately, the choice and election of the Popes remained exclusively in the hands of the Emperors, who had arrogated to themselves the privilege of choosing the successors to the chair of St Peter and of placing thereon persons devoted to the empire. The men selected were generally the relatives or Chancellors of the German monarch, and were consequently bound by ties of family interest or policy to uphold the constitution.

This custom could not fail to be pernicious in its results to the Church, upon whom it inflicted Pontiffs who were incapable of fulfilling their holy trust, and whose obligations to their patrons made them hesitate to reprove their vices.

To add to the troubles by which the Holy See was afflicted, the sin of simony had insidiously corrupted the elections, and the way to the throne was assured by generous contributions to the imperial exchequer. The prize, as a natural consequence, fell to the highest bidder, and "there ensued a succession of anti-Popes whose elevation was a scandal to the whole Catholic world."

Spiritual qualifications or personal fitness, we learn, were entirely dispensed with in the false Pontiffs, and it was this omission which made their identification so unmistakable. In vain, we are told, did earnest Christians seek in them the administrative ability and purity of life which should distinguish the temporal head of the Church. Nor did they find in these usurpers that devotion to the interests of the Holy See which demanded her Vicar to be continuously on the alert to detect and resist encroachments on her civil and religious rights.

Corruption having thus crept to the very footstool of St Peter, what wonder that much laxity of morals prevailed among the flock committed to the charge of such hireling shepherds.

St Peter Damian, who lived at the time, thus describes the sad state of society, both religious and secular:— "Ecclesiastical discipline is almost gone, the holy canons are despised and the ardour due to God's service is shown only in the pursuit of earthly goods. The lawful order of marriage is disregarded. We have long since renounced all virtue. Laymen seize the rights, the revenues, the possessions of the Church, and seize the substance of the poor as they would the spoils of their enemies. In our days the world is but a theatre of intemperance, avarice and lust."

But a new era of life and enthusiasm was about to dawn for the oppressed Church, and the first ripples of the mighty

wave of freedom began to stir the stagnant waters of sloth and indifference. Her long-neglected canons were restored and the smouldering embers of faith were quickened in the hearts of her children, whose lives had long ceased to respond to the teachings of her Divine founder.

"Like a giant arising from sleep, she awoke once and for ever from the lethargy which had numbed her vitality, and an impulse of life and action thrilled her dormant fibres. Casting off the chains which had bound her to earthly interests, she shook herself free and stood forth the 'Champion of Virtue and the Denouncer of Vice.'"[1]

At this crisis of the Church's history a Pontiff was needed who with a stern purpose and an inflexible will joined to a profound sense of duty should undertake the control of ecclesiastical affairs.

Hildebrand, a humble monk of Cluny, responded to this Divine call, and his was the hand which "kindled the torch of reform and bore it aloft with clear and steady brilliancy to the gaze of the Christian world."[2]

While the pioneer of Church liberty yet lay in his cradle events were passing around him which laid the foundation of the corrective measures which were to constitute his life's work.

Benedict VIII., who had been restored to the Papal chair by Henry II. of Germany, had in the Council summoned for the purpose of crowning that monarch issued a decree that the election of the Pontiffs should be freely made by the clergy and the Roman people. This rule was a confirmation of those already drawn up by Popes Eugene and Leo IV. as far back as 824 and 847.

The passing of the decrees just at that time, remarks the historian, derived singular significance from the fact that the Emperor, who was afterwards canonised, not only gave his tacit consent to their enactment, but also at the same Council confirmed the Church in all its rights and privileges conferred by Charlemagne.

[1] *Ecclesiastical Biography*, by the Right Hon. Sir James Stephen.
[2] *Ibid.*

# Matilda, Countess of Tuscany

Under the auspices of Hildebrand a crusade was entered upon to restrict the encroachments of Germany, by enforcing the laws which secured Papal freedom. The Church armed herself with her Divine authority and henceforth resisted the "obstinate persistence" with which the Emperors sought to depose every successor of St Peter who refused to submit to their supremacy in spiritual matters.

A long and severe struggle ensued which, though it cost the Pontiff his throne, was in the main successful. It resulted not only in giving the Holy See her liberty, and leaving her stronger than ever, but it also paved the way for the future independence of Italy.

Although his name has a German sound, it was to Tuscany that Hildebrand owed his birth. He was born in 1013 at the town of Soane, and history is silent as to his parentage except that his father, Benzo by name, followed the calling of a carpenter. Some writers claim for him descent from the illustrious family of the Aldobrandeschi, who were the owners of numerous castles and towns in the vicinity of Sienna, but the fact is shrouded in uncertainty.[1]

Like the hidden life at Nazareth, the early years of the reformer were passed unrecorded in the bosom of his simple home sheltered beneath the wings of parental affection.

While he was yet a child, the veil of oblivion was drawn aside, and tradition allows us a brief glimpse of the slight, fragile being, whose name was hereafter to sound like a trumpet in the ears of the enemies of the Church.

One day, while he was yet too young to learn to read, the little boy was amusing himself in watching his father at work. He tried to catch the shavings as they fell around him in quick succession from Benzo's active plane, and laughed aloud in childish glee whenever he succeeded in capturing the curling wood. His mother, engaged in needlework, gazed now and then at the child, patting his glossy, black curls, and watching with maternal interest the

[1] *Lives of the Roman Pontiffs*, by the Chevalier D'Artayd de Montor. 1871.

pertinacity with which his little hands endeavoured to grasp the spiral toys.

Suddenly the attention of both parents was simultaneously drawn to the fact that the pieces of wood had fallen into no accidental positions. Gradually they assumed the characters of letters and words, until at length a complete sentence was formed, not in the native tongue of Hildebrand and his parents, but in Latin, the universal language of the Church.

Benzo realising that this was no matter to be treated lightly, called in a cleric who happened to be passing at the time, and besought him to interpret to them the message which they believed to be from Heaven regarding their child.

The priest on entering the humble workshop glanced curiously at the shavings, and was no less astonished than the parents at perceiving on the ground before him the following prophetic sentence: "*Dominabitur a mari usque ad mari,*" "He shall have dominion from sea to sea." "Thus," remarks a learned writer of our own times, "he was able to predict the glories of that universal empire of which he was destined to be the head."[1]

The child, though inheriting a delicacy of constitution which kept him aloof from the rough games of his more hardy playmates, grew to be a bright, merry little fellow endowed with a singularly sweet and gentle disposition.

At an early age he began to show such an unusual aptitude for learning that his parents resolved to give him the best education their limited means could afford. Noting his piety and ready obedience, and doubtless influenced by the forecast of his future, they conceived the idea that Heaven intended him to be devoted to the priesthood. In furtherance of this object they prepared to make many personal sacrifices in order that he might receive a course of instruction which should fit him to fill that holy office. As

[1] Lecture delivered at the opening of the Presbyterian Divinity Hall by N. M. M'Michael, D.D.

is well known, the Catholic Church watches over her children with maternal solicitude, and to them she looks to carry out her work for the salvation of souls, and those who sincerely desire to devote themselves to her service are never repulsed, no matter how humble their origin or limited their means. "If the candidates for holy orders," says Cardinal Newman, "have a vocation for the strict discipline of religious life, and are capable of assimilating the instruction needed for the priesthood, they may in course of time rise to fill the highest positions of honour and responsibility she has to bestow."

The Benedictine rule allows parents to offer their children under the age of fourteen either to become lay students, cloistered monks, or to be trained for the priesthood. Benzo and his wife therefore availed themselves of this permission, and made arrangements for placing Hildebrand under the care of his uncle, the Abbot of the monastery of Our Lady.

On the morning of his eighth birthday his parents led him by the hand from the house in which he was born, down the tortuous and narrow streets which would never more echo his pattering footsteps. On he went in the brilliant sunshine through the rich valleys and dales of his native land into unknown places upon which his wondering gaze had never before rested. Gaily he tripped along at Benzo's side, and joyously prattled of the pleasurable anticipations of his new life.

His mother, whose heart was heavy at the thought of the near parting, hung upon every word which fell from the rosy lips of her darling son. She sighed as she remembered that no more would his silvery voice make melody in her ear and charm away the monotony and fatigue of her daily household duties.

This first journey of the little Hildebrand was long and toilsome, but his sweet nature found no relief in complaint, though his tongue was less active and his step less elastic ere he reached the slopes of the Aventine Hill upon which the monastery was situated.

The Abbot, a learned and gentle man, awaited his nephew's coming, and the gates swung quickly back at the approach of the future Pontiff, who responded with the unstinted affection of childhood to the welcoming embraces of his uncle.

When the visitors had somewhat recovered from their fatigue the Abbot led the way to the chapel in which the brethren were assembled, and there, at the foot of the altar, the little Hildebrand, like Samuel of old, was solemnly dedicated to the service of God.

It was a silent home to which Benzo and his wife returned on that *fête* day of their child, but they would not allow it to become a sad one. They had made the sacrifice willingly, and were comforted by the thought that they had "consecrated the gift to the Giver."

The young novice, thus early withdrawn from parental control, soon became absorbed in the light duties assigned him, and his teachers were so tender and kind to their charge that the remainder of his childhood was spent in a "veritable atmosphere of love."

Ere long he learned to conform to the rules of the Order in which he was to be enrolled. At the first sound of the matins bell he lightly sprang from his hard bed, and, like the birds, "in warbled notes or hallowed lays" sang to the praise of his Creator. As he grew older he was permitted to take part in the services of the chapel. He followed the line of monks as "they glided noiselessly by the bare wall of the cloister, leaving the middle space for the Abbot and such pious visitors as wished to devote the first hours of the new day to God."[1]

In those days Rome was essentially the centre of Christian thought, and thither the hearts of all men were turned. Happy were the pilgrims, remarks a saintly Cardinal, who, regardless of age or rank, enjoyed the privilege of visiting the seat of Catholic authority and of receiving the blessing of Christ's Vicar on earth.

The monastery of Our Lady was a noted one, and many

[1] Dean Church.

travellers to the city, including Cardinals, Bishops, Abbots, Priors and monks, from foreign lands availed themselves of the rest and shelter afforded by the hospitable Benedictines.

Drawn thither by the peaceful life of meditation and retirement from the cares of the world came statesmen, warriors, nobles and members of princely families, and among these representatives of all ranks of society Hildebrand spent his early years.

He went quietly in and out among that mixed assembly, his pale face and spare, though erect and well-formed, figure interesting the visitors upon whom he was deputed to wait. The retention of this office, generally delegated to elderly and experienced brethren, is a testimony to the trust reposed in the young novice whose retiring manners and modest demeanour won for him the golden opinions of all.

Although silence was much observed in the cloisters of St Benedict, the rule was relaxed in favour of the guests, who availed themselves of the privilege and frequently addressed their shy attendant.

Hildebrand, though never courting attention, was naturally observant. From his habit of noting the conversation and courtly bearing of the strangers "he learned in time to acquire that conciliatory bearing, and that antique courtesy" by which he was afterwards so eminently distinguished.

Among those who frequently came to the Aventine Hill retreat was the Abbot of the monastery of Cluny, which had been established in France, and belonged to the same Order as that of Monte Cassino founded in 529 by St Benedict.

Hildebrand's willingness to serve, his affectionate nature and brightness of temperament, appealed to the holy monk, who grew to love the child with an intensity that never lessened. The dark, earnest eyes of the future Pontiff lighted with pleasure whenever the Abbot noticed his presence or met his gaze, and between the two, in spite of the disparity of years, there sprang up a friendship that death alone interrupted.

# Hildebrand a Student

Noting the boy's singleness of purpose and self-restraint, qualities so unusual at that age and which gave promise of intellectual power, the Abbot desired to develop Hildebrand's latent talent. He consulted the uncle as to the future of his nephew, and obtained permission to carry him to France in order that he might be under his personal charge.

The remaining years of boyhood were therefore spent at Cluny, where, under the strict discipline observed at the monastery, and guided by his patient teachers, the young monk seriously devoted himself to study. The motto of the Benedictines is "Labour and prayer," and the lives of the brethren were distinguished by "a beautiful union of religious learning and labour." "Eschewing all idleness," Hildebrand's youth passed rapidly away. Each day brought its own allotted tasks, which were faithfully completed ere the weary head sought its well-earned repose on the hard but welcome pillow.

His time was spent in a ceaseless round of duties, and was divided between "meditation, study, reading, writing, translation of ancient literature, and artistic illumination of manuscripts and parchments."

To relieve these multifarious demands upon his brain, his mind was diverted by agricultural and various other kinds of manual labour which took him for six or seven hours daily into the open air. He appears to have had but little leisure for recreation or for the rest which nature demands during the period of youth.

So exemplary was the conduct of the student and so extraordinary his capacity for learning, that the Abbot, when speaking of his charge, described him in the words of Holy Writ: "This child shall be great before the Lord."

There is nothing authentic related of the early manhood of the young monk except his promotion to the office of Sub-Prior.

At the age of thirty-one Hildebrand left the monastery in the capacity of chaplain to John Gratian, his patron, who

had been elected to the Papal throne under the title of Gregory VI.

Two years later Gregory was compelled to resign in favour of the Archbishop of Bremen, Chancellor to the Emperor Henry II.

Hildebrand, who had the greatest affection for his "lord and master," as he termed him, followed him into exile, and finally retired with him to Cluny, where the Pontiff ended his days.

About this time the government of Cluny was undergoing a change. A young monk had so gained the admiration and respect of the community by "his admirable bearing, obedience, charity, sweetness, prudence and zeal," that though he was only twenty-five years of age he was chosen to be their head. This was Hugo, "renowned above all other Abbots for his piety and virtue," for which twelve years after his death he was canonised. Of noble appearance and princely bearing, the new Abbot led an austere life, sharing the humble fare and the labours of his brethren even to "washing the beans in the kitchen." So tender was He of the infirm or very young monks, that for their sakes he extended the conventual allowance of food as much as possible, even permitting fowls to form part of the diet. He himself, however, observed a perpetual abstinence and strictly followed the rule of St Benedict, which allowed as the daily *menu* one pound of bread and two cooked dishes of fresh eggs, cheese, roots or vegetables.[1]

On one occasion the monastery was visited by St Peter Damian, who was much shocked at the quality and quantity of the food which was placed before him in the refectory. Calling the Abbot aside, this stern disciplinarian commented severely upon the extravagance of using grease with the vegetables!

In this peaceful retreat under the gentle Hugo, Hildebrand's years passed swiftly and uneventfully away, and at first there was nothing to indicate that he was distinguished in

[1] Dean Church.

any particular above his fellows. But as time rolled on, his massive intellect towered over his brethren, whom he far surpassed in knowledge, and his firm grasp of logic threatened to rival that of his religious superiors.

Directed by the exiled Pontiff, he pursued with assiduous patience and zeal severe literary, theological and philosophical researches. His unsparing efforts were eventually crowned with so signal a success that he was regarded as one of the most noted students of the age.

Nor was his influence confined to the monastic precincts, for even in those days when news travelled but slowly, the fame of his sanctity, austerity and learning became widespread. Hildebrand, however, in his modesty and dislike of ostentation, kept himself as much as possible withdrawn from public notice.

A man possessing such mental capacity could not long remain hidden. The Sub-Prior, though much against his inclination, was often forced to leave his retirement and go on missions in connection with the government of the monastery. Essentially was this the case when both tenacity and diplomatic skill were required to ensure their ultimate success.

His clear insight into the workings and cravings of the human heart found expression in tender and passionate appeals to the higher nature and susceptibilities of man, "which overflowed in his discourses and caused them to be eagerly sought after."

Hildebrand spoke with graceful ease and in a sonorous voice, and so remarkable were his oratorical powers that the theologians of the day came from all parts of the world to hear him.

Captivated not so much by his fertility of imagination as by his depth of knowledge, which compelled the response of their intellect, they yielded a ready attention. We are told that his hearers would sit unwearied for hours to listen to his rich and vigorous flow of language.

He is described as being "full of youthful ardour, his

piercing black eyes appeared as if animated by the fire of inspiration, and his severe look seemed to penetrate the consciences of men and to be able to discover what was faithless or doubtful there." The Emperor himself, to whose Court Hildebrand was sent on an embassy, sat entranced by the zeal and pathos of his sermons. The monarch, carried away by his admiration of such resistless eloquence, remarked to the Empress that he had "never heard anyone who preached so boldly the Word of God."

In 1046, while Hildebrand, then in his thirty-fourth year, was still at Cluny, Henry III., King of Germany, was crowned at Rome on the very day that his Chancellor received the tiara and ascended the pontifical throne under the title of Clement II.

Scarcely had the Emperor in all the pomp and glory of his new dignity returned to Germany when a rival power arose in the country he had just quitted. A new era was commenced and a sword unsheathed which was to turn its edge upon the imperial throne and loosen its hold upon Italy for ever.

In one of the most picturesque provinces of Tuscany to the south-west of Reggio, from which it was about fifteen miles' journey, stood the famous Castle of Canossa, round the foot of which the little village nestled trustingly under its shadow as if seeking the protection of its tall and powerful neighbour.

The stronghold, grand and stern in its solitude, rose majestically from the rocky base, of which one side only was accessible; it crowned a height commanding a vast prospect, beyond which lay the rich and sunny plains of Lombardy on the north, and on the south a magnificent view of the Apennines.

The fortress, enclosed within three stone walls, two of which were connected by a bridge, was secure in its strength and position, and defied any hostile attempts to penetrate within its massive gates. This impregnable fortress was built early in the tenth century by Count Azzo "of martial

memory, the founder of the house and the Achilles of the family."

The adventures of this mighty warrior have been handed down with the halo of romance with which tradition has surrounded them and form the basis of many a thrilling story. "Azzo," sings the poet chronicler in his personification of the mighty Castle, "was everything at Canossa. Azzo multiplied my towers and elevated my walls as far as the sky. Was it not by me he became rich, by me he became rich and powerful, by me that everything came to him? It was then natural that all he had conquered of beauty, of rare virtue, casques, armour, breast-plates, battle-axes and swords should serve to ornament my vast halls."[1]

In Canossa was born to Azzo his heir who married the sister of Hugh Capet, King of France. They had but one son, Boniface, who, though less renowned than his sires, became equally celebrated for his open-handed hospitality. His princely deportment and his lavish expenditure, which by a wise administration of his immense estate does not appear to have affected his revenue, won for him the title of "Magnificent." The rulers of the adjacent provinces, however envious they may have been of his fortunes, were considerably impressed by his grandeur and power, and paid him almost regal respect.

To the Castle, after his father's death, Boniface brought his young and beautiful bride, Beatrice of Lorraine, a princess related by close ties to the imperial family and to the French monarch.

In 1044 the walls of the grim fortress echoed the feeble infantine cries of the heir which had been born to the estates of Boniface.

Great was the Margrave's joy at the event which was, as he believed, to perpetuate his race, and many toasts were drunk by the doughty knight and his friends to the health and future renown of the little Frederic.

Two years later there was a daughter added to the

[1] Donizo.

family, a child whose history became so full of incident and romance, that its relation savours more of legend than of actual experience.

Anselm Badagius, Bishop of Lucca, baptized the infant and bestowed upon her the name of Matilda, which her parents had chosen and which she was to render world-renowned.

The Princess grew and thrived, breathing the soft air of her native land, and with it that love of Italy which became to her as essential as life itself.

She is described as "a beautiful child of the royal race, she was of the race of the masters of the world."[1]

The little maiden proved a worthy descendant of the illustrious line of warriors, from whom she inherited her dauntless courage, and her fame as "The Great Countess" has survived her for nearly eight centuries.

Beatrice was a wise and tender parent, and Matilda, with her brother, led a free and happy life in blissful ignorance of the future, and with no sorrow to throw a cloud over the sunshine of their childhood.

One of their greatest pleasures was to read on holy days to their mother out of her richly-ornamented Psalter. This book, though beautifully illuminated, could not be compared to that from which the mother of Bruno, Count of Hapsburg,[2] had taught her little son, and "the contents of which he had found it so hard to master." The children had seen that now historic volume which was "interlined in letters of gold and enriched with gold and silver plates and precious stones." So much were the words of Holy Writ valued in those days before printing multiplied the copies and brought them within the reach of all, that artists devoted their talents to embellish the portions of which they were the fortunate possessors.

The Italian language, interwoven as it was with her own Tuscan tongue, presented no difficulties to Matilda. Every morning she stood with her brother by the side of Beatrice

[1] Donizo.

[2] Afterwards Leo IX.

and read or recited to her from *The Book of Hymns for Every Day.* These beautiful poems were composed by Prudentius, the Spaniard, who lived in the fourth century and was esteemed as one of the most learned men of his time. The hymns, arranged for daily devotion, have been the solace of Christians for more than fifteen centuries, and some of them are not unknown even at the present day.

Matilda also received daily instruction in the tenets of her faith, and religion was so early instilled into her heart that it formed the mainspring of her life and actions.

The Catholic Church seeks by a never-ending round of services to keep alive the devotional spirit of her numerous children in all parts of the world. Matilda could not, as the chronicler reminds us, pass a day and scarcely an hour without having her thoughts recalled by the monastic bells which at stated times summoned the faithful to prayer and by the daily mass in the Castle chapel at which Donizo the family chaplain officiated. The little maiden religiously attended the ceremonials observed on Sundays and the many holy days of the Church. She followed the solemn ritual with a devotion and attention that proved her to be a child of keen perception and reflective mind.

On Palm Sunday, Matilda and her brother were taken to the cathedral at Lucca, where palms were blessed and distributed while the choir sang of the Children of Israel encamped under the palm trees at Elim. They followed with interested gaze the long line of monks who formed into procession and passed out of the building bearing gracefully-waving palms in remembrance of our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In death-like silence they listened to the thrice-repeated knocks made with the cross on the closed door, which was then thrown open "and all entered singing the praises of our Saviour God."[1]

With more lasting fervour than had the acclaiming

[1] By this symbolical act is signified the opening of the gates of Heaven by the death of our Lord on the Cross.

crowd in the Holy City, Matilda joined her silvery treble to the deep sonorous tones of the black-robed brethren as they chanted the antiphons of the day.

During the year there were frequent processions through the prettily-decorated streets and hamlets of Tuscany. In these out-of-door perambulations the little maiden took active part with the children of the towns and villages belonging to the marquisate.

On Saint Mark's Day took place the procession instituted by Gregory the Great, and divided by his direction into seven parts, in the last of which walked the children of the diocese, Matilda and her brother forming a portion of the infantine group.

Another ceremony at which they assisted was that of the annual presentation of the olives and grapes for which the Tuscan provinces were renowned. These first fruits tastefully arranged by the Countess in baskets gaily decked with garlands of vine leaves were carried by the children to the altar rails, where they were asperged[1] and blessed in the name of the Bountiful Giver.

Similar processions to the churches were made at various times for blessing the bells, and blessing the oil to be burned in the church lamps which hung alight night and day before the altars, and many like ceremonies.

Perhaps Matilda loved best the anniversary of the Feast of St Agnes, since it involved the long and irksome, but, to the children, highly exciting and interesting journey to Rome.

The Eternal City, with its wonderful buildings and monuments on all sides, was an overwhelming vision to the little country-bred princess, who soon wearied of the crowds and bustle she everywhere encountered. What a relief it was to the child to step from the glaring streets and the noise of the gay capital into the calm grandeur of the palace wherein dwelt the Vicar of Christ.

[1] The name *asperges* is taken from the Latin commencement "asperges me" of the Psalm, "Thou shalt wash me," etc., which precedes the ceremony of sprinkling with holy water.

Young as she was she felt his influence, and her face flushed with pleasure when she encountered the gaze of the saintly Leo, whom she had been taught to revere as the Head of the Church.

As he slowly passed through the kneeling multitude on his way to the Church of St Agnes she followed the example of those around her and reverently bowed her dark little head to receive his apostolic blessing.

The Tuscan visitors had come to witness the ceremonial of the presentation of two spotless lambs, which were on the Feast of St Agnes presented at the altar during the singing of the *Agnus Dei.*

With eager interest Matilda saw them, after the service, given into the charge of the nuns, who would weave from their wool, bands, which were afterwards placed all night upon St Peter's altar. These were the palliums which were afterwards to be sent by the Pope to the future primates to be worn as symbolical of their sacred office.

The warlike customs and restlessness peculiar to the times did not allow a prince to spend much of his time in his home. Boniface, occupied as he was with the affairs of his marquisate and engrossed with his favourite sport of hunting, which with him amounted to a passion, saw but little of his family. The Margrave was a man of warm affections, devoted to his wife, the regal Beatrice, and proud of his children, in whom he saw refined reflections of his former self. His little daughter was his idol, and he loved to look upon her earnest, up-turned face with its winsome smile and trace therein the regular features of her mother. "Her tall form and the ardour of Italian blood," says the family chronicler, "she derived from her father," together with that fearlessness of disposition which reminded Boniface of his own childhood and afforded a striking contrast to her mother's shrinking nature.

The liberality of the Margrave was renowned throughout Italy. The lordly portals of Canossa, so formidable to its enemies, were thrown open to all who came with friendly

intent. No one was refused admission. Boniface the Magnificent well deserved his title. He received weary travellers who had climbed the steep ascent to his fortress with a generous kindness that became proverbial. The personal attentions bestowed upon the needs of wayfarers by himself and his family were, we are told, "almost conventual." His munificent displays of open-handed hospitality were even in those days of extravagance unrivalled in their splendour, and were distinguished by a refinement yet more rare. He hailed with boisterous demonstrations of welcome the advent of knightly visitors with their brilliant trains, with whom he not unfrequently made excursions in search of game, for Boniface, as has been already remarked, was an ardent lover of the chase.

On the other hand Beatrice encouraged the presence of those whose intellectual endowments "formed a wholesome and pleasing restraint upon the more reckless of her husband's guests."

Sometimes the children of the family were allowed to be present at these gatherings, but very seldom, for the conversation was not always suitable for childish ears. Matilda, who possessed a lively imagination, listened with musical appreciation to the songs and poetic recitals of the guests who sought hospitality at the Castle. With ready ear and kindling eye she heard their accounts of stirring deeds of valour, of sieges, battles, victories over almost fabulous numbers, and other gallant and often impossible adventures. When, as it generally happened on these festive occasions, the Margrave recalled the warlike scenes through which he had passed, his little daughter at his feet was oblivious of aught else. She sat entranced, watching the varying emotions which affected him during the recapitulation of those tales of heroism. Nurtured in the traditions of her race, she loved best to hear the stories of her grandsire's exploits. How he took pity on the youthful widow Adelaide, the betrothed bride of Otto the Great, and whose name "is found in the calendar of saints and is honoured in many churches." How Azzo

released her from prison where she had suffered the greatest hardships and indignities, and delivering her from her persecutors carried her off to the care of his wife in his Castle at Canossa. How the Castle was stormed by the fierce pursuers to whom Azzo refused to give up the weeping Queen. How the young and handsome Emperor, "arriving in hot haste," was unable to release his bride. How he sent messages of love and promises of relief in letters fastened to arrows which, with truthful aim, he shot over the heads of the besiegers into her window in the tower. How, in this same chamber in which Matilda was born and which was her own bedroom now, the Queen waited for an opportunity of escape, trusting to the chivalrous honour of Azzo to defend her during the lengthy absence of the Emperor. How the barred gates of the Castle were afterwards thrown open, and she who had entered its walls "as a desolate fugitive quitted them the bride of one of the greatest and noblest Emperors that ever occupied the throne of Germany."

Habituated to scenes of peril himself, Boniface, by these narratives, instilled into his children's minds that disregard of danger which was characteristic of his race and which in after years served Matilda in such good stead.

The Margrave took personal interest in teaching his little daughter to ride, and she early learned to have an upright seat and to manage her pony with grace and skill. The active child entered with zest into the martial training of her brother, and even took part in the sword exercises, in which, according to the custom of the day, Boniface endeavoured to make his son an adept.

The effect of this physical culture was to render the body of Matilda robust and inured to fatigue, and to develop that intrepidity of spirit for which she became remarkable.

During the greater part of the year the Castle was deserted and the family sought shelter from the fierce rays of the Italian sun in the leafy shades of Lucca. In this beautiful Tuscan city, which was also the seat of a

bishopric,[1] Beatrice had her favourite residence, and in her palace was collected such rich and rare treasures of art as were then known.

Matilda's forefathers, though they thought lightly of human life and were somewhat careless in the practice of their religion, were, on the whole, pious men, and the churches and monasteries erected by them in various parts of Tuscany testified to their devotion to the Holy See.

During their sojourn in Lucca the children loved to go into these edifices, of which there were several in the city, and to visit the tombs containing the remains of their ancestors. Not many of these martial chiefs had died in their beds or of the infirmities peculiar to advanced age. Not a few of the trophies with which the buildings were enriched were souvenirs of the battlefields upon which the warriors had fallen. They wished for no other fate than to breathe out their last consoled by the ministrations of the Church and with shouts of victory borne upon the air to their ears as they lay dying.

But there were brighter scenes than these upon which Matilda could gaze. Scenes which were more suited for her childish thoughts to rest upon, for Nature had been very bountiful in her gifts to Tuscany and especially to Lucca.

Before her lay the wonderful panorama of the Apennines in all their beauty, and the Monte Guilano which Dante describes as preventing the two cities of Lucca and Pisa, which formed part of the marquisate, from seeing each other although they are but a few miles apart. "A delicious climate there," remarks Mr Alison in his *History of Europe* "brings the finest fruits to maturity, the grapes hang in festoons from tree to tree, the song of the nightingale is heard in every grove, all nature seems to rejoice in the paradise." "Where," says another writer, "all harmonises

[1] It is a curious instance of the enterprising nature of the Irish, that as early as the seventh century a basilica was erected in memory of Frediano, son of an Irish king who was chosen Bishop of Lucca in 560, a See which he retained for eighteen years.

with the clear blue sky, its orange groves, its forests of chestnuts and palms, of olives and of almonds."

The children wandered with all the fearlessness of youth amidst the beauties of Nature in its grandest forms. They gambolled by the sides of swift-running streams which they gaily endeavoured to outstrip in speed. Or they sang to the music of the gently-falling cascades and mingled their voices with the roar of the mountain torrents. Gathering wild flowers in the woods, the air of which was laden with the delicate perfume of the lovely blossoms, was an intense joy to these fortunate little Tuscans. Their love for nature found vent in songs which joined the melodious warblings of the birds who flitted blithely from tree to tree over the heads of Matilda and her brother. The sounds floated on high far beyond the sunny skies, and were wafted in sweet harmony to the throne of God whose praises they extolled.

What happy days were thus spent in sweet communion with Nature, who opened to their wondering eyes her secrets of plant and insect life. Before them lay scenery diversified and enriched by all the variations peculiar to their native land—mountains, plains and valleys, rivers, streams and lakes, all enclosed by the snow-capped Alpine barrier whose lofty peaks reared themselves in stately guardianship of the children playing at their feet. Inspired with the serenity and grandeur of her surroundings, Matilda early acquired that innate love of the beautiful for which her countrymen are distinguished and which survived the troubles and anxieties with which her future was clouded.

The Princess is described at this time as being a child of an extremely happy disposition, whose natural vivacity was tempered with a gentle gravity of demeanour as became her rank. As this purports to be a history and not a romance, it must, alas! be confessed that she had inherited a touch of that imperiousness which so frequently distinguishes those of strong wills and who are born to command.

Beatrice, who was as clever as she was pious and beautiful, drew to her Court the most profound scholars and

theologians of the day, and these visitors took great interest in Matilda and inspired her with that taste for learning which has rendered her name famous.

By these means and under these gentle and ennobling influences were laid the solid foundation of the character of the young Princess. While Europe was a theatre of strife and turmoil, there, in the heart of Italy, was being reared in Christian precepts a patriot who was to be the means of restoring liberty to the Church and of securing the independence of her country.

# Influence of Hildebrand



## CHAPTER II

"History separated from biography is an inexplicable riddle; for in the individual characters of rulers and princes, in their passions, interests, and good and bad principles, can alone be traced the springs of the outward and visible actions which history records." —TYTLER.

IT is necessary to leave for a while the record of Matilda's history, which was afterwards to become so inseparably interwoven with his own, to revert to that of Hildebrand.

The prophecy uttered during his infancy was on the eve of fulfilment, for he was endowed by nature with those gifts which enabled him to become a leader of men.

From his cell in the monastery at Cluny he mainly directed events which intimately concerned the government of the Church, and his was the powerful intellect which influenced the Papal and Imperial Courts. "His talents and virtues, no less than his remarkable erudition, rendered him superior to his contemporaries and gave him absolute power over the minds and hearts of all with whom he came in contact."

His advice was sought on all matters requiring a knowledge of statesmanship, and "he it was," remarks the historian, "who controlled the election of the four consecutive Pontiffs who preceded him on the throne of St Peter."

The first of these was Bruno, Count of Hapsburg, a relative and Chancellor of the Emperor Henry III. He was born in Alsace, and at a very early age retired from the pleasures and distractions of Court life to enter upon the severe rule of St Benedict.

He became Bishop of Toul when only twenty-four years old, and had governed that See little more than twenty-two years when he was chosen by the Emperor at a full Synod

convened at Worms to succeed to the brief pontificate of Damasus II.

On his way to Rome to be crowned the Pope-elect paid a visit to Cluny, where he made the acquaintance of Hildebrand, who was his junior by eleven years. Bruno was so much impressed with his conversation and ascetic appearance that he invited him to be his companion to the Eternal City. "I cannot go with you," briefly replied the monk. "But why not?" inquired the Bishop, astonished at the refusal delivered in a manner which appeared disrespectful and which was altogether foreign to the habitual courtesy of Hildebrand. "Because," said he, "without being canonically instituted, you are going to lay hands on the See of St Peter. Never did Peter nor his Master give to earthly monarch the power to choose the Shepherd of the World."

Bruno was silent at the unexpected reply which carried with it a conviction of its truth. The remark, uttered with that impressive earnestness for which Hildebrand was remarkable, opened out to the Bishop the consideration of a question, the importance of which he had overlooked. "His soul kindled at the words of the Prior, and he saw duty by a new light." His conscience was troubled by the idea that he had been, without any spiritual preparation, about to fill a position to which he had no right.

Dismissing his followers, he remained with Hildebrand during the night, and the early matins bell found them still in serious consultation. With his usual fertility of resource the monk devised a plan by which the Bishop might be elected to the Papal chair, not merely by the nomination of the Emperor, but also by the free votes of the Roman people and clergy. "Thus," counselled Hildebrand, "you shall taste with a peaceful conscience the joy of having entered the fold of Jesus Christ by the door like the Good Shepherd, and not by the window like the robber in the Gospel."

The next morning Bruno, acting on the advice of his friend, dismissed his attendants and the retinue with which

the Emperor had furnished him. Accompanied only by Hildebrand he set out from the monastery attired in the simple garb of a pilgrim with "sandalled feet, staff in hand, and a scrip on his shoulder."

The crowds, who on the previous evening had beheld the arrival of the Bishop with his courtly train of French and German knights, were waiting in readiness to witness his departure. Great was their surprise, therefore, to see him emerge on foot and unaccompanied except by the black-robed Benedictine prior.

The story of Bruno's humility preceded him, and on his arrival in Rome crowds of excited citizens flocked to meet the pilgrim and escorted him with deafening plaudits to the Church of St Peter.

Bruno, however, had lost the self-confidence with which he had started from Germany to enter upon his pontifical career. His conscience had been wounded to the quick by the severe comments of the simple monk, who in that never-to-be-forgotten interview had communicated to him a share of his own enthusiastic devotion to the cause of the Church. He no longer considered himself worthy of the tiara, and with a new-born modesty hesitated to accept the honour which he had before considered within his grasp.

From the pulpit he made an impassioned appeal to the citizens and begged, nay, implored them to choose one better qualified by age and experience to fill the vacant throne.

But the people had already made their decision and nothing he could urge would convince them of his unfitness. Not even when, with the view of impressing his unworthiness upon them, he made a public confession of all his sins.

As the review of his past life with all its weaknesses and errors passed before him, for he spared himself nothing, the remembrance wrung tears of penitential sorrow from his eyes, and his hearers wept in sympathy. Their opinion however remained unchanged, and far from regretting their choice they were all the more determined that such courage and

humility in avowing his faults should have "the reward of the highest place."

Bruno's entreaties were of no avail, and on the first Sunday in Lent, 1049, he was publicly enthroned and amid the acclamations of the people crowned under the title of Leo IX.[1]

His first act was to call a council at Rome on March 26, which was attended by a large concourse of Bishops from all parts of the Christian world.

It was, we learn, rather a stormy gathering, for the decrees laid down at the conclave did not meet with the approbation of many present. Among the laws passed were those especially directed against simony. All positions gained by gifts were declared null and void whether they were held by Bishops, priests or heads of monastic institutions, and clerics were warned under threat of excommunication to lead continent lives.

The word simony is derived from the name of Simon the Magician who offered the Apostles money to purchase from them the power of performing miracles and of communicating the gifts of the Holy Ghost. St Peter, it may be remembered, took upon himself as Head of the Church to denounce the impostor, and in words which have been handed down to us in Holy Writ administered a stern rebuke to the Magician for his presumption.[2]

Simony formed one of the worst evils of the age with which the Church was burdened, and against which Leo like his predecessors issued severe and stringent laws. It had been

[1] It may here be remarked that a Pope on his coronation takes a new name, generally that of some saintly predecessor whose virtues he most particularly wishes to imitate. He retains his Christian name, however, for the signature of ecclesiastical documents.

[2] Peter said unto him, "Thy money perish with thee because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

"Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

"Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven to thee.

"For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." Acts viii. 18-26.

laid down from the earliest Christian times that those placed in positions which enabled them to dispense the spiritual benefits of the Church were but the agents and not the owners of the heavenly treasures, and that they could not make exchange for temporal gifts.

Favoured by the baneful practice Bishops and other Church dignitaries were chosen for their adherence to the political factions which elected them rather than for their own fitness. Ecclesiastical benefices were left vacant in order that the revenues might be appropriated by the powerful and extravagant nobles of that period, whose vices went unchecked and unreproved by these time-serving prelates.

From Italy the Pontiff proceeded to Germany where he was joyfully welcomed by the nobles who had shared his youthful sports and by the Emperor with whom he celebrated the Feast of St Peter and St Paul at Cologne.

Before entering the cloister Leo, when Count of Hapsburg, had been trained with his relative Henry in all the warlike exercise of the day. He had exhibited such proficiency in these passages of arms that he became famous for his military skill and feats of daring, and young as he was had already gained some glory in the field.

When therefore on his return to Rome, he found the new settlers, the Normans, had besieged and laid waste Apulia, then belonging to the Church, the memory of old days came upon him and revived his martial spirit. Then we are told was seen the strange sight of a Pope of Rome riding to do battle at the head of an army, which included seven hundred Suabians.

His soldiers were, however, unable to resist the impetuous rush of the fierce and well-accoutred Normans, who numbered some three thousand. They were defeated at the outset, and Leo was taken prisoner.

Great was the consternation of those valiant children of the Church on becoming aware of the identity of their captive. They treated him with the utmost respect, waiting

upon him with bended knee and offering him all the hospitality which their camp afforded.

The Pontiff, who had resigned himself to his fate, was surprised and touched by these unlooked-for evidences of submission to the Holy See. In his joy at his unexpected treatment, he conferred upon the chief the title of Count of Apulia, and bestowed on him and his followers the lands they had seized to be held as fiefs of the Church.

By this graceful and diplomatic act he so won the affection of his captors, already impressed by "his virtues and manly bearing," that they became henceforth the most zealous adherents and firm champions of St Peter's chair.

Leo was no less taken by the appearance and simple piety of their leader, Robert Guiscard, or Wiseheart, heir of the celebrated Tancred, whose twelve sons were equally renowned for their courage and chivalry.

On the Pope's return to Rome he was, at his request, accompanied by Robert and a retinue of Normans, who appeared to be on the best possible terms with their late antagonists.

Tidings of the capture of the Pontiff had naturally caused universal consternation in Rome, but the anxieties of the Cardinals were soon relieved by assurances of his safety. When he appeared within sight of the city, the people deserted their houses, and with loud demonstrations of welcome hurried to the gates to greet him.

Great was their joy and astonishment to behold him riding at the head of the long cavalcade by the side of Duke Robert, who paid him the deference due rather to a conqueror than to a prisoner of war.

There was one who would have responded to Leo's call to arms, and whose martial power would probably have changed the tide of war, but alas! death had laid him low and the courtly Boniface would ride forth to battle no more.

The Margrave had been accidentally shot by one of his friends while hunting in the forest, and at first the hurt was thought to be but trivial. But though, under the never-

ceasing care and nursing of his devoted wife, he lingered for a while, he did not recover from the wound the arrow had inflicted.

Sad times were these for the little Matilda, and the loss of her beloved father was not the only one she was to deplore. The angel of death yet hovered with lingering wing over the battlements of Canossa. It waited at the chamber where, in another part of the castle, the heir to the estates of which the window commanded so fine a prospect, lay dying of fever. While yet the body of Boniface awaited burial, the son, whom he hoped would have succeeded him, was closing his youthful eyes to the things of earth.

Poor Beatrice was at first almost stunned by the suddenness of the dual misfortune. To be deprived of the love and protection of her lord, and to lose her child, a beautiful boy of ten years, who gave promise of being a worthy Margrave was a trial which threatened to overwhelm her by its magnitude.

The domains over which she was thus unexpectedly called upon to rule were very extensive and comprised nearly the whole of the northern part of Italy. Stretching from the Adriatic to the Tyrrhenian Seas, the Marquisate included almost every physical feature within its boundary. Her subjects were numerous and their temperaments as varied as their natural surroundings, although during her husband's lifetime they had given many proofs of their devotion to his family.

The heiress to these domains, the extent and richness of which rendered her the wealthiest princess of Italy and almost of Europe, was Matilda, who, at the time of her father's death was a healthy-looking maiden of eight summers.

The stricken widow had not much leisure to indulge in the luxury of grief in which so many mourners find comfort. Formidable as were the perplexities which her husband's decease opened out before her, they were still further increased by the ill-concealed enmity of neighbouring rulers.

Hers was a perilous position in those rude times, nor had she any allies upon whom she could reckon for aid against those turbulent spirits whose jealousy prompted them to be dangerous rivals. On all sides she was surrounded by men desirous of possessing themselves of her lands, and with whom her subjects were involved in continuous quarrels.

The age demanded a ruler whose strong arm like that of Boniface, could keep in check these unscrupulous meddlers and Beatrice, unused to take the initiative in any public act was, as she believed, incapable of directing the government of a principality. Thus at a period when strife like a fierce tempest swept over Europe, and when lands and liberty were in deadly peril, the sole management of the Tuscan Marquisate devolved upon a delicate woman, a woman, too, of most refined susceptibilities, "learned and withal so beautiful."

Besides her other trials, the piety of the widowed Countess was daily shocked by the open immorality and excesses and other social evils, the outcome of the age in which she lived and from which Tuscany was not exempt. Eminently religious as she was the troubles which afflicted the Church afflicted her also, and she could not but deplore the indifference displayed by her people in spiritual matters. It was with sorrow that she heard from Hildebrand of the power and increasing numbers of the schismatics and other enemies of religion who were corrupting the belief and morals of her countrymen. She considered herself responsible before God for the well-being of her subjects, whose progressive prosperity she endeavoured to promote by the aid of her wealth and by the salutary pattern of a holy family life.

Beatrice was of a naturally frail constitution, and her troubles would have engulfed her in a whirlpool of despair, had not Heaven endued her with wisdom and fortitude. Those who are chosen by our Lord to share His cross are at the same time given the strength to emulate His sufferings and His patience. Armed with confidence in Divine support,

the princess went bravely on in the path of duty, taking ever the one nearest and plainest and pursuing it in the face of all obstacles.

At this critical moment, and while yet the shadow of her loss environed her, help came from human hands, and in a most unexpected and undesirable form.

Her cousin Godfrey, surnamed the Bearded, the Black, and sometimes the Bold, had long been in dispute with the Emperor with regard to the Duchy of Lotharingia, to which he laid claim. Godfrey, who was one of the most powerful of the German suzerains, at length broke out into open revolt and succeeded in killing his rival. In his anger he set fire to the Cathedral of Verdun, the bishop of which diocese had favoured his enemies. He, however, repented his act of sacrilege immediately afterwards and made all the amends in his power to repair the damage he had caused.

The Emperor, furious at the defiance of his authority, took up arms against his rebellious subject. Godfrey lost his cause and the duchy passed into the hands of the imperial favourite.

Deprived of his estates and exiled from his native land, the Duke conceived the idea of retrieving his fortunes by a bold stroke. This was no less than a direct proposal to his relative, the Tuscan princess, to become at once his protector and his wife.

This singular form of wooing, appealing as it did to the readily awakened sympathies of Beatrice, succeeded even beyond Godfrey's most sanguine anticipations. Ere long, to his own surprise and relief, he found himself and his son "Le Bossu" comfortably ensconced in the widow's stronghold of Canossa.

This union, as may be supposed, was a source of much vexation to the Emperor. Besides the dislike he entertained for Godfrey he had other plans for the disposal of the Tuscan territories by which he proposed to strengthen his power in Italy.

For this reason he had formed the project of affiancing the heiress to these rich and important provinces to his infant son, then in his fifth year.

On hearing the news of the marriage which thwarted his carefully arranged schemes he flew into a violent rage. He protested that he had witnesses to prove that violence had been used to make Beatrice consent to the union and that he intended to revenge the insult to his relative.

Placing himself at the head of his army he crossed the Alps with all possible speed and descended upon Tuscany with the object of compelling Godfrey to release Beatrice from the union into which he chose to believe she had been entrapped.

The threatened bridegroom, on hearing of the approach of the Emperor and divining the cause, was inclined to resent his interference, and settle the question at the point of the sword. The Countess, who was anxious to avoid bloodshed, prevailed upon her newly-wedded husband to try the effect of conciliatory messages. The Duke followed her advice, and sent an embassy to the camp bearing a letter which, in manly and precise terms, explained the whole matter to the irate monarch.

"As a banished man," said he, "despoiled of my possessions, I should surely be excused for having availed myself of the succour of a wife whom I obtained without fraud or violence and whom I have wedded without fraud or violence according to the rites of the Church."

Henry, unable or unwilling to reply to this straightforward statement, preserved an angry silence. Dismissing the envoys he pursued his march, determined on separating the married pair and driving Godfrey out of Italy.

Beatrice was fully alive to the danger which would threaten her own and her child's interests were she to acknowledge the right of the German monarch to interfere in her affairs. Ignoring Godfrey's reiterated suggestions of referring the cause to the issue of combat she resolved to make a personal appeal to Henry's sense of justice. Taking with her the little Matilda she left Canossa and, accompanied

by a slender escort, went to meet the Emperor ere he had crossed the northern boundary of her territory.

Presenting herself before the council which Henry had hastily summoned, and the last which he as Emperor had the right of convening in Italy, the beautiful and graceful widow pleaded her cause and announced that she had entered the marriage of her own free will. "I have done," said the Countess in clear, thrilling tones, which convinced all but her obdurate relative, "what it is lawful for all to do. My first husband being dead I was all alone in the world without a man of arms to defend me and be a protector to my child."

Turning to the Emperor she addressed him in somewhat of his own spirit. "I have committed no treason," urged the Princess, adding that the monarch could not act with justice unless he allowed her the same liberty which noble women had always enjoyed.

But Henry turned a deaf ear to her explanation and, in spite of her spirited defence of her action, ordered her to be placed under immediate arrest.

From the council the Countess and her child, thus summarily withdrawn from the comforts of their palatial home, were taken under an escort to the camp where they were exposed to the rude but well-meant attentions of the imperial soldiers.

What the Emperor's plans were with regard to Beatrice's future it is difficult to conjecture. Probably he intended by keeping her in his power to ultimately force her to accept young Henry as a son-in-law.

At all events he conveyed both mother and daughter to Germany, where they remained in captivity at the Court with no prospect of freedom. Summer had passed, autumn had given place to winter and spring came, and they still remained prisoners, until Beatrice's soul grew sick with fear and the little Matilda grew pale and thin with longing for her home and sunny skies.

On hearing of his wife's capture Godfrey abandoned all

hopes of effecting her release, knowing how futile his efforts would be. Shunning a meeting with Henry he escaped to Flanders, which was at the time in revolt against the Emperor, and waited until such time as Beatrice should be allowed to return to Italy.

It is somewhat remarkable that neither the Countess nor Godfrey appears to have made complaint to the Pontiff, although the Holy See was at that time the general Court of Appeal throughout Christendom. Neither do we find from history that Leo, whose influence over the Emperor was well known, made any protest on their behalf. Certain it is that he was at the time very much occupied with the duties of his position and may not have considered the matter serious enough to call for his intervention.

Leo's pontificate has been described as one continual journey for the weal of the Church. He made an exhaustive tour of Italy, correcting abuses, enforcing regulations and canons long since held in abeyance, excommunicating incorrigibles and removing the ban from penitents.

His very rare moments of leisure were devoted to music of which he was an ardent lover and a composer of no mean merit. His studies ended but with his life, and so anxious was he to thoroughly understand and refute the arguments of the Greek schismatics that at the age of fifty he set to work to master the Greek language, "a task in which he eminently succeeded." Novaes describes him as "a Pontiff of a tender and solid piety and endowed with a loving and ardent zeal." Pope Victor III. (1087) adds, "He was a truly apostolic man, born of the royal family, rich in learning, eminently pious, and ripe in the knowledge of ecclesiastical matters."

Leo's holy life was, however, fast drawing to a close. Finding his end approach he desired to be laid in the choir of St Peter's where he had so often worshipped his dear Lord. With feeble voice he besought Heaven's blessing upon the faithful and gave absolution to repentant sinners who, touched by his patience and devotion, with bitter tears relieved their seared consciences of their past and almost forgotten

crimes. Hushed to awe by the solemnity of the scene the kneeling penitents listened with breathless interest to the faint accents which fell from the lips of the Holy Father. He prayed that God would protect His Church from all enemies visible and invisible, and the responsive "Amens" were mingled with sighs and sobs which his hearers vainly endeavoured to suppress. The evening closed in and the crowds dispersed to their homes to speak with bated breath of their beloved Pontiff whose words and the circumstances under which they were uttered would never be effaced from their memories.

Leo, left alone with his Cardinals and the faithful Hildebrand, held a last council with them relative to the appointment of a successor. At daybreak at the sound of the bell which summoned the worshippers to matins he expressed a wish to be placed before the altar. Tenderly he was supported to the spot where he desired to be laid and there "he wept and prayed long" until seeing that his strength was nearly exhausted they lifted him again into the choir.

He ended his pontificate as he commenced it, by making a general confession of the sins of his past life and received absolution at the hands of a Cardinal. Mass was then celebrated by one of the Bishops present, and Leo remained with his hands clasped during the reading of the prayers, the familiar words of which he endeavoured to follow. A sweet smile played round the lips of the dying Pope; he closed his eyes as if asleep, and when the congregation rose for the last Gospel the soul of Leo passed silently upwards into the presence of his Lord.

He died on April 19, 1054, on the anniversary of the day on which he had, with such an overpowering sense of his own unworthiness, celebrated his first pontifical Mass.

Thus, after governing the Christian world for little more than five years, he ended his reign just as the Church was on the eve of a struggle for the supremacy to which as the foundation of Christ she was entitled.

The Pontiff's virtue and his ecclesiastical zeal have

deservedly ensured him a place in the list of those whom the Church delights to honour and on his canonisation he became the guardian saint of the city of Benevento.

In carrying out his reforms Leo had, as history reminds us, an able ally in Hildebrand whom from the commencement of his pontificate he had retained in Rome. In order to keep the prior near at hand he had made him Abbot of the Monastery of St Paul's in which was established a small community. Most of the brethren had dispersed to other asylums and the church and monastic buildings lay almost in ruins, the revenues having been for some years applied to the use of powerful and grasping laymen.

Hildebrand was not daunted by the obstacles which lay in his way, and by his personal appeals and unanswerable arguments roused in the spoilers a sense of shame for their wrong-doing. Their repentance took an active form, and they not only made full and complete restitution of their ill-gotten gains, but assisted the newly-appointed Abbot in his efforts to restore the building to somewhat of "its ancient splendour."

On the death of Leo the Cardinals took the first step towards the assertion of their exclusive right to elect his successor. Doubtless in the last council which had gathered round the dying Pontiff they had received authority from him in this new departure from the established rule. Without waiting for the Emperor to nominate a Pope they took independent action and formed themselves into an elective assembly. Their votes and those of the Roman citizens were unanimously given to the elevation of Bishop Gebehard, a native of Innsbruck and a Benedictine monk, as was his predecessor. Although an advance had been made in the right direction the Church was not all at once to shake off the imperial fetters. Hildebrand was therefore deputed by the electors to negotiate with the Emperor for the ratification of their choice.

With his usual promptitude the Abbot lost no time in crossing the Alps and presented himself at the German court ere the news of the death of Leo had been received.

Fatigued though he was with his trying journey, travel-stained and consumed with anxiety as to the success of his mission, he allowed himself no rest until, like a true ambassador, he had delivered his credentials.

To the exiled Beatrice the unexpected appearance of her countryman was as welcome as that of an angel. Matilda was in a transport of delight and, unawed even by the stern presence of the Emperor, clung to the arm of her old acquaintance, albeit her senior by thirty-three years.

Henry, who personally entertained much respect for the Legate, accorded him a cordial welcome, and the mission prospered beyond the most sanguine hopes of the gratified Hildebrand. Far from raising any objections to the nomination of Gebehard, who was his relative and chancellor, the monarch gave a most unqualified assent to the elevation of his favourite. Henry was not only a pious, but also an astute sovereign, and the popes of his choice, of whom Gebehard was the fourth, were all men of excellent character and well fitted by their abilities to fill the holy office to which he appointed them.

The decision was a source of much relief and pleasure to Beatrice, since the new Pontiff, a man of noted integrity, was also related by the ties of blood. He was a personal friend too, and ere he had abandoned Court life for the cloister had paid frequent visits to Canossa.

Gebehard, however, whose intellectual capacity for study induced him to devote himself to learning, was serenely happy in the solitude of his cell where, absorbed in his manuscripts, he had no thoughts to spare for the world around him. With many a sigh at the relinquishment of his beloved pursuits, to which he sadly bade a perpetual adieu, he tore himself away from his literary work and took up, at the Emperor's wish, the cares of Episcopal life.

He had scarcely reconciled himself to the fulfilment of his onerous duties when, by the death of Leo, he was suddenly called upon to fill the Papal chair.

Gebehard's election illustrates, though in a less degree

than that of his predecessors, the manner in which the voice of imperial authority forced its favourites into the highest positions in the ecclesiastical world. Without any preparations or training for their new duties they had no choice but to obey the Emperor's command, though sometimes against their own private judgment and the dictates of conscience.

No wonder that pious men like Bishop Gebehard, who had the real welfare of the Church at heart and thought not of their own advancement, shrank from such a step. No wonder they recoiled with horror from the sacrilege they were called upon to commit in this uncanonical induction into the chair of St Peter. In the early days of the Church the Popes received the news of their election with humility and even with gladness, and the reason is not far to seek. The tiara was then but the prelude to the martyr's crown, and there was but one step from the throne to the arena, and the obedience of the Pontiffs to the call of the Church received a speedy reward in the Divine commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

When, however, the great wave of persecution that had swept over Christianity and threatened its very existence had spent itself in unavailing fury against the successors of the Apostles, the situation became changed. The ambition which fired the Popes to place themselves in the front rank of victims for the Truth was a test of courage no longer required of them. The impetus to zeal being thus withdrawn the Papal chair ceased to be coveted and, naïvely remarks the historian, "became the only throne in the world which men assiduously avoided."

The Vatican henceforth was the centre not only of testimony for the Faith, but of a continuous struggle between the spiritual and temporal power. The piety of the Pontiffs availed them nothing in the eyes of European rulers; their actions were misrepresented, their motives misjudged, their authority defied and unless they were endowed by nature with an inflexible will they went to the wall.

# St Peter's Chair

At that period of history when the boundaries of territories wavered and changed like an indented and ever-shifting coast-line, when men rose to despotic power by oppression, it was the Pontiff who stood in their path and laid a restraining hand upon their cruelties. He was the only man on earth who dared to beard the fierce lions in their own lair and release from their tyranny the people they had enslaved. As Vicar of Christ he did not hesitate to reprove immorality in high places and call even monarchs to answer for their disregard of the sacrament of matrimony. Nay, he went still further, for, armed with Divine approval, he inflicted upon incorrigible offenders the punishment both spiritual and temporal of the Holy See.

Nor was moral and physical courage all that was required in a Pope at that age. The events of the time were not only frequently beyond the control of ecclesiastical authority but were even fraught with danger to the Papal chair. Their management and direction demanded a diplomatic skill rare at that period, and in which Gebehard felt himself to be sadly deficient. In short, the Church required then as now that its sovereign should, in addition to the harmlessness of the dove, be strongly imbued with the wisdom of the serpent. "The occupant of St Peter's chair," remarks a writer of the present century, "is bound to strive for the rights and privileges justly pertaining to the Church of which he is the Head. On his shoulders the difficulties rest, and to his judgment the decision of each is deferred." His personality as the acknowledged and unerring interpreter of the Divine Will gives him a power unequalled in the world, his influence is unlimited and extends to all the regions of the earth. His position, though frequently assailed and shaken to its very centre, is as indestructible as the Rock upon which it is founded, and "the gates of hell," declares our Lord, "shall not prevail against it."[1]

But the Pontiff, though infallible in *ex-cathedra* definitions

[1] "The Holy Bible," published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Matt. xvi. 18.

of dogma, is in other ways prone to the weaknesse inseparable from our humanity. Though the love and respect of the whole Catholic world are centred in him as the father of the faithful, he is precluded from "that personal sympathy and encouragement upon which even the greatest minds will often rest," and in the words of Holy Writ he treads the wine-press alone.[1]

Hence it is that the introduction of the Popes, especially those of the Benedictine Order, so frequently contains an account of their unwillingness to ascend the pontifical throne. There was no appeal, however, when once their elevation was decided upon, and "against their will" they were forced to obey the voice of the Emperor. Nor were they much better off when the imperial control of the tiara had ceased. By popular choice, and afterwards by the elective assembly of Cardinals, they were obliged to accept the burden of responsibilities from which their souls recoiled.

To a man of Gebehard's retiring disposition the prospect was appalling, and a contemplation of its stupendous vastness almost overpowered his sinking heart. He shrunk from the ever-increasing difficulties that beset his path in which there was no alleviation and from which there was no escape. Even when death should release him from the labours which had laid him low there remained for him hereafter to render a strict account of his stewardship.

The Bishop regretted also the sacrifice of his peaceful life in the cloister which was required of him and to which, he reflected with a sigh, he could never return. But for the entreaties of Hildebrand, for whom he had a warm affection, he would have refused to resign his happiness either at the wish of the Cardinals or the bidding of the Emperor.

Beatrice naturally regarded the Bishop's election as a promise of her own freedom, nor was she disappointed in her anticipations. On taking leave of Henry, Gebehard added his prayers to those of the Legate with such effect

[1] "The Holy Bible," published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Isa. lxiii. 3.

that he obtained a tardy permission for the release of the Princesses.

The Countess and her child, overjoyed at their emancipation, accompanied their friends to Italy, and never did the passage of the Alps appear so desirable and enjoyable a journey as it was to these home-sick exiles. The travellers proceeded in the company of the Pope-elect to Rome, and Matilda for the first time was witness of the solemn ceremonial with which a Pontiff enters upon his reign.

Arrived at the gates they were met by a procession of the citizens, headed by the Cardinals, nobles and prefects, who escorted them to St Peter's, which, "like a majestic mother surrounded by a group of daughters brilliant in the graces of youth," rose amidst other churches, chapels and convents.

Suddenly the buzz of excitement was hushed and a silence fell upon the multitudes, who cast themselves on their knees as the sound of the bell warned them that the Mass with all its impressive and solemn ritual was about to commence. Matilda, kneeling by her mother's side, inhaled the sweet fragrance of the incense, and there came into her mind the verses she had read in Holy Scripture,—"And another angel came and stood at the altar having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."[1] As the clouds were wafted in graceful wreaths the little Princess, in unconscious imitation of the Psalmist of old, prayed that her petitions might also rise towards the throne of God.

At the conclusion of the Mass, Gebehard was conducted to the balcony overlooking the great piazza, and there "received the imposition of hands from other Bishops inferior to himself and holding under him and from him their sees and jurisdictions." With an emotion which she could scarcely control, the child, for she had but just entered upon

[1] Revelations viii. 3, 4.

her tenth year, watched every detail of the ritual. She gazed with reverent awe upon the face of Gebehard—to give him his name for the last time—upon whose features, free from all evidence of excitement, shone the reflection of the peace which dwelt therein. Her eyes were never removed from the figure of the Pontiff, who, although he had but just attained middle age, was bent with study, and whose slight figure "appeared pathetic in its loneliness in the midst of that vast assemblage." Surrounded by a goodly array of Cardinals, mitred abbots and a multitude of secular clergy, and in full view of the nobles and citizens of Rome, he was then publicly crowned as Victor II., the name by which he was afterwards to be known.

The impression of that day's events were never effaced from the retentive mind of Matilda, and it was fitting that she who was destined to become the defender of the Holy See should have been present at the coronation of one of the worthiest of the Pontiffs who prepared the way for the freedom of the Church.

The entry of Beatrice into her marquisate was made the occasion of universal rejoicing, the fervour of which testified to the affection with which she had inspired her subjects. The air was filled with the shouts and cries and loudly-uttered blessings of the warm-hearted Italians. They surrounded her with every demonstration of delight and escorted her a great part of the way to Canossa, to which fortress the Countess repaired. A general holiday was proclaimed, work was everywhere suspended, and the Tuscans gave themselves up to family gatherings and feastings in honour of the arrival of the exiles.

Poor Beatrice! what an accumulation of business awaited her. What complications of affairs, domestic and political, had arisen during her lengthy absence. To what endless histories she had to listen of neighbouring interferences and aggressions, and there were even dark whispers of the treasonable dealings of some of her subjects who were suspected of leanings towards Germany.

# Visitors to Canossa

To Matilda, however, the return to Tuscany was but a joyful realisation of all that she had been longing for during her weary captivity. She was well content to be once again among her native vines and olives and to gaze upon the lovely snow-capped guardians of her home.

Her transports knew no bounds when the tall towers of the stern-looking castle appeared in view. To her they bore no forbidding aspect, but seemed to smile as if to welcome her whose first breath of life had been drawn within the gloomy walls of the great fortress. She clung with childish affection to the good Donizo and embraced with fervour the many friends who had assembled to greet her return. She gladly resumed her acquaintance with those who had come from the towns and villages of her future marquisate, and recounted to them the events of her captivity. With child-like solicitude she hastened to examine minutely and with renewed interest every well-remembered haunt from which she had been absent so long and in which her quick eye at once detected any change.

All these incidents, so small in themselves, were matters of great moment to Matilda then and afterwards. It was these apparent trivialities which developed in her heart that patriotism which led her to exclaim, "I could die for thee, my dear Italy."

Ere long Godfrey, on hearing of his wife's release, returned to Canossa, and the Castle became as of yore the centre of courtly hospitality and refinement. Many old friends, well known to the world for their piety and learning, reappeared to gladden the heart of the Princess by their presence and sweet counsel. Among these was Frederic of Lorraine, brother of Beatrice, who came thither from his retreat at Monte Cassino without ever dreaming that he was to succeed his cousin Victor in the Papal chair.

Here, too, but at rare intervals, came Gerard, the stately Bishop of Beatrice's city of Florence, who was also one day to be crowned as Pontiff.

Another visitor who afterwards became Pope was

Anselm Badagius, Bishop of Lucca, a city which was included in the marquisate of the Princess. Anselm had baptised the infant Matilda and had proved himself to be a tried and trusty friend of the Countess, when the sorrow of her husband's death fell upon her.

There was another Anselm, who, ere he retired to the monastery at Bec, sometimes came on a visit to Canossa. This was Anselm of Aosta, whose "tenderness, humility and earnestness in dealing with the frailties of his brethren" has endeared his name to Englishmen as one of the saintliest of the Archbishops of Canterbury. He was at this time a young man of about twenty-four years of age, and whose profile is described as being "worthy of a sculptor, sweet yet dignified, with that expression of austerity tempered by gentleness so frequently seen in portraits of mediæval ecclesiastics."

Hugo of Cluny stayed for a while with Beatrice whenever the business of his monastery brought him to Rome. Here he found a little repose from his cares, and the bright and winning manners of Matilda chased away many a line which anxiety had imprinted upon the handsome face of the gentle monk.

Another visitor around whose head already shone the halo of sanctity was Peter Damian, "who loved to bear witness to the piety of Hugo," for whom he bore the affection of a kindred soul. Peter was ever welcome at the Castle, for well Beatrice knew that his sackcloth habit, which afforded so strange a contrast to the richly-dressed knights who thronged her audience halls, covered one of the tenderest hearts that ever beat. She invariably treated him with the respect which "his virtues and zeal" demanded, for to her mind his abrupt manners and curt sayings savoured more of pious sincerity than the polished utterances of the more courtly prelates.

Austere as he appeared to others, Peter Damian was ever loving and gentle to children, and his rugged features relaxed into smiles as Matilda, who was gifted with a retentive

memory, repeated to him some of the Latin hymns which he himself had composed. During their captivity in Germany, the Countess had taught some of these to her little daughter, and found comfort in hearing her recite the beautiful verses of which the following was her favourite:—

"There no waxing moon nor waning
Sun nor stars in courses bright,
For the Lamb to that glad city
Is the everlasting Light,
There the daylight shines for ever,
And unknown are time and night."

Ever distrustful of her own powers Beatrice submitted her various plans for the training of Matilda to the counsels of the saintly sons of the Church who frequented her court, and especially she valued the opinion of Hildebrand. Whenever his missions allowed him a little leisure to visit the scenes of his childhood he never failed to make a stay with the hospitable Countess. Her ready sympathies in his harassing work afforded the weary monk much consolation, and her purse-strings were ever loosened to further his schemes of benevolence.

Beatrice was at the same time a gainer by these interviews, and availed herself gladly of his prudent advice in many matters both spiritual and temporal, especially those which mostly concerned her child.

With such holy influences surrounding her, what wonder that the object of so much solicitude became earnest and thoughtful beyond her years. What wonder that she became "animated with a desire to devote herself to the service of God and that a noble yearning filled her soul and a great zeal sprang up within her." Amidst all her pleasures, and they were manifold, her greatest was to be in the society of Hildebrand, and she hailed with unbounded delight the precious but rare hours spent with the gentle monk. Red letter days they were indeed to her when his slender figure was descried wending its way up the steep ascent where a hearty welcome awaited him. Sitting at his feet and look-

ing with reverence at the expressive beauty of his features, she became "penetrated with that ardent zeal for the Holy See, which was the glory of her life."

The mother's eyes would sometimes fill with tears as she gazed upon the eager, upturned face of her sensitive, high-souled child, who made so fervent a response to the voice of affection. Often she would tremble with apprehension as she thought of the future, when there would come a break in the calm and tranquil life, and when, perhaps, there would be no mother at hand to shield and defend her in the hour of temptation and danger.

# Education of Matilda

## CHAPTER III

"The law of force is dead!
The law of love prevails!
Thor, the thunderer,
Shall rule the earth no more,
No more with threats
Challenge the meek Christ."—LONGFELLOW.

AMONG the many cares and distractions which the government of her Marquisate necessitated, Beatrice never lost sight of the importance of providing her child with a solid education. She fulfilled her maternal trust with a vigilance that never relaxed and "every precaution that a fond mother's anxious heart could suggest she anticipated and provided for." Assisted by Donizo she devoted the greater part of each day to the culture of Matilda's expanding mind which, with a perception unusual to one of her tender years, acquired a taste for literary pursuits. The little scholar proved an indefatigable worker and found delight in tasks which would have repulsed children of more mature age. Her incessant mental activity was only equalled by her remarkable tenacity of memory.

Donizo, of whom mention has several times been made, was the family chaplain at Canossa. Though his name is spelt by historians in various ways, it is easily recognisable, and derives interest from the fact that its owner was a poet of no mean ability. His books of hexameter verses, divided into chapters, are still preserved as specimens of early Italian literature, and it is to his pen we are indebted for many particulars of the family events concerning the Margraves of Tuscany, which would otherwise have been lost in obscurity. Apart from their own intrinsic interest these contemporary pictures and incidents of mediæval life throw a light upon the

manners and customs of the time which render them a real aid to the study of Italian history. He had, as he himself tells us, intended to dedicate these versified chronicles of her family to the Princess, the last of her race, but her death, ere he had finished their compilation, frustrated his purpose.

The indulgent poet seems to take special delight in lingering tenderly over those details of Matilda's history, which more especially treat of the courage which formed her chief characteristic. The Princess appears to have justified even in childhood the verses composed in her praise, which describe her graces of mind and manner. The descendant of a line of warriors she displayed from an early age that generosity of spirit and temerity for which her forefathers had been distinguished, and which she inherited in a remarkable degree.

She was at home and a frequent guest in the dwellings of the poorest and meanest of the peasants, where her bright smile and sweetness of disposition made her ever welcome. With no thought of fear she ventured with all the confidence that innocence inspires into quarters, which in those wild times when robbery and murder were of common occurrence, were considered unsafe except for armed pedestrians. No harm ever came to the child, and the sunshine of her manner, with its air of infantine truthfulness, won for her the love and admiration of all those with whom she came in contact. Even the most lawless and depraved of her subjects, and in those days the best were but rough in manner and speech, held her in reverence and would have given their lives to defend their darling little Countess from insult or injury.

Beatrice not only permitted but even encouraged Matilda to visit the sick and poor and to find pleasure in alleviating the poverty which, in that age of discord and strife, was but too prevalent. It was a wise policy on the part of the Countess thus to allow the child to mingle freely with the people over whom she would one day rule, for it brought her into close communication with their habits and needs. No motives of self-interest induced Beatrice to follow this broad method of leading her little daughter in the paths of philan-

thropy, nor was it undertaken to court popularity. The natural imperious spirit which the heiress of the Margraves had derived from her ancestors, and which had been incited by Boniface, had even at that early age begun to assert itself. It was to check this pernicious growth that her mother assiduously cultivated in her young mind that true charity which "vaunteth not itself."

Heaven, which had so liberally dealt with Matilda in other ways, was equally generous in the endowment of mental powers, and she nobly responded to the gifts which had been so lavishly bestowed upon her. With a concentration which was remarkable for her years she applied herself with such untiring vigour and patience to her studies that Donizo seems to be never weary of singing the praises of his docile pupil. He describes her as having an insatiable thirst for knowledge and as being particularly talented in her mastery of foreign languages.

Although Matilda's days were passed in the acquisition of knowledge, which strengthened her memory and developed her mind, her education did not end there. It included the most essential point of a child's training—that of the control of the will and its subjection to the intellect. Under the guidance of her pious mother and able and holy teachers this application of the moral law was ever kept in view and formed the basis of her religious education. Thus she was armed to resist the temptations to which her high birth and riches exposed her, and the two greatest faculties with which God has endowed His creatures were brought into harmonious union with His Will.

When the court moved within the See of Lucca Bishop Anselm came to the aid of Beatrice, and together they spent many hours with their charge instructing her in theology, the tenets of which were not so clearly defined then as they are now. In the traditions of the early Christian writers, Matilda learned, but through a less easy process, the same doctrines which are advanced by the Church at the present day. In the devotional works of the ancient Christian poets

she traced the same words of faith and love which, for more than fifteen hundred years, have cheered the hearts of the faithful.

These extensive literary researches implied a thorough acquaintance with the classics upon which they were based and which were included in the list of Matilda's almost fabulous acquirements.

In those days such familiarity with the dead languages was rarely met with beyond the cloisters and therefore in a woman—a girl—was especially remarkable.

Matilda, in spite of her various studies, still retained the natural vivacity of youth, nor did she allow her learning to eclipse those winning manners which add such a charm to life, and which were a source of so much comfort to her gentle mother. The growth of her affectionate and unselfish nature remained unchecked, and of her it might be written in the words of Holy Scripture, she "increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man."

Donizo took keen interest in the progress of his pupil, and the gradual unfolding of her character was to him ever a source of wonder and pride. In the verses, of which the following is a free translation, he describes her in the quaint but affectionate terms he invariably used when writing of the "joy of her race."

> "To all she spoke even to the meanest without a murmur,
> Gentle, joyful and of a happy frame of mind.
> She dictated books, she spoke the Teutonic language,
> In French also she was very well versed.
> None more studious than she and fond of books,
> Of which she abounded, and of all arts and sciences,
> In the midst of her many labours and in mind happy."

During the time that Matilda, under the shelter of her mother's wing, was fitting herself for the high position which she would one day be called upon to fill, Pope Victor had thrown himself with zeal into the arduous work of Church government. So absorbed was he in the conscientious fulfilment of the many duties which his task entailed that he

allowed himself but little time for rest or leisure. Even the few hours of privacy which the close of day claimed for him were not spent in relaxation, nor were his nights given up to repose. When the darkening shadows of evening succeeded the twilight, when all sounds were silenced and the city slept, the Pope alone kept lonely vigil. Allowing but a few hours for sleep he utilised the remainder in the pursuit of studies which the many distractions of the pontificate prevented him from enjoying during the day.

Absorbed though he was by his multifarious engagements, he had not lost sight of his friends in Tuscany, who had not visited Rome since his elevation had ended their exile. The accounts, however, given by Hildebrand and other holy men who visited Canossa, of the mental development of Matilda afforded him much satisfaction. The descriptions he received of the edifying lives spent by mother and child filled his heart with joy. They reminded him so forcibly of the peace of the cloister, that he yearned to be once again within the narrow limits of his cell in close communion with his God. Having put his hand to the plough, however, there was no turning back, and with steady guidance and discerning eye he prepared the furrows for the reception of the good seed which was to yield fruit a hundredfold.

Neither his natural timidity nor bodily weakness hindered him in the stern path of duty, and he threw his whole soul into the task of carrying out the reforms of his predecessors. His energy was untiring. He convened council after council in order to call the Bishops and clergy together and discuss with them the best methods of correcting the wide-spread abuses of the time.

The most heinous of these was that of simony which had, by its insidious example and corrupting influences, tarnished the mitres of the majority of the German Bishops.

The Emperor rendered all the assistance in his power to his late chancellor and resolutely set his face against the appointment in Germany of Bishops whose lives did not conform to the religion they professed. Addressing the

Council of Constance he embodied his opinions in the following words, especially intended for those present who were suspected of simony: "Ye who ought to be a blessing to all around you degrade yourselves by covetousness, and advance both by buying and selling holy things. My own father, for whose soul I am in just trouble," continued Henry, "was too often guilty of this sin, but be it known to you all, that he who shall henceforth be stained with this soil shall be cut off from the service of God. For it is by practices such as these that plague and war and famine are drawn upon nations."[1]

Thus Pope, Emperor and Cardinals were united by a chord of sympathy in the repression of a sin which like a deadly disease was sapping the moral life of the prelacy and by its extensive ravages threatened the very throne of St Peter.

Victor who had unfailing trust in the merits and influence of Hildebrand sent him to make a tour throughout France in order to grapple with the evil which, though not universal in that as in other countries, had made its appearance in several of the Sees.

The Legate, though an inveterate foe to the practice of simony, was remarkable for the forbearance and even tenderness which he extended towards those who attempted to disengage themselves from its venomous grasp.

He made it an invariable rule to act at the outset with gentle persuasion, pointing out to the wrong-doers the evil they were perpetuating and which would survive them to the detriment of religion and to the danger of the Church. "No one," remarked Hildebrand, "reaches the highest rank at a simple spring; great edifices rise gradually," and he might have added as a summary of his policy, "Great reforms are effected slowly."

The age required him," comments the historian over eight centuries after the Reformer had passed to his reward. "Armed with the sanction of pontifical authority, and with the power of his own mighty intellect, the Apostle went

[1] *Life of Gregory VII.* M. Abel François Villemain, 1874.

forth, animated with that burning zeal and unflinching vigour which were his characteristics."

The Cardinal, acting in his capacity as Legate, summoned a council at Lyons, and in unsparing terms denounced those who had weakly allowed themselves to be corrupted by promise of reward.

One of the Bishops accused of having received bribes denied the crime laid to his charge, and though he was known to be guilty there were no witnesses to substantiate the fact. Hildebrand, gazing long and sadly at the haughty prelate, at length rose to his feet and with majestic mien raised his hand to stem the denials which fell from his confident lips. "There is one way, my son," said he, "to silence all the doubts of your innocence and that is by reciting with me the Gloria." Delighted at the apparent simplicity of the test the Bishop readily complied, but when he came to the name of the Holy Ghost, which reminded him of the Scriptural denunciation of the additional sin he was about to commit,[1] he faltered and turned pale, and his trembling lips refused to utter the words.[2] Casting himself, full of contrition, at the feet of his judges he poured out before them all a confession of his guilt and received absolution at the hands of Hildebrand, who wept tears of joy at the return of the penitent.

In every city through which he travelled the Legate publicly attacked with vigour the violation of the privileges of the Church, sparing no one of whatever rank whom he considered deserved denunciation. His own lively faith and austerity of life made vice appear so despicable in his eyes, that, though his soul yearned for the reconciliation of the offender, his pure mind would allow of no compromise between the sinner and the sin. "He inflicted chastisements at the call of justice, he made relentless war on simony adultery and the contempt of divine and human laws."

[1] "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." —MATT. xii. 31.

[2] *Lives of the Saints.* Alban Butler.

Hildebrand's natural discrimination gave him a profound insight into the frailties of human nature and enabled him to discern with unerring eye the nobility or weakness of character of those with whom he was brought into contact. This gift rendered him a powerful antagonist in the many combats which he was called upon to wage against the schisms, which in all ages have perverted the tenets of the Church.

Ere his return to Italy his attention was drawn to the heresy of Berengarius, which denied the Real Presence in the Eucharist and which had found many supporters in France.

From the pulpit Hildebrand hurled his denunciations against so erroneous a doctrine and reminded his hearers of the fearful account they would have hereafter to render if, by its promulgation, they caused the weak ones of the fold to be misled.[1] He insisted on the awful responsibility they incurred who sought to deprive the Church of the greatest blessing which God has given to His creatures—that of His continual Presence in their midst.[2]

Before the logical reasonings and irrefutable arguments of Hildebrand all doubts were dispelled, and even Berengarius himself, conscience-stricken and remorseful, acknowledged his error.

The Legate, drawn to his full height and filled with impassioned fervour for his faith, allowed his stern and piercing eye to wander over the listening multitudes. But though he seemed to the people, who had hung breathless upon his words, to search their very thoughts, he met with no sign or gesture, even in that vast assemblage, of either uncertainty or dissent.

[1] It is recorded by three of the Evangelists that for such a man "it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were cast into the sea."—Holy Bible, MATT. xviii. 6; MARK, ix. 42; LUKE, xvii. 2.

[2] "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world," are the words with which St Matthew concludes his Gospel. They were almost the last words of comfort addressed by our Lord to His disciples, and which Berengarius by his teaching attempted to disprove.

# Zeal of Hildebrand

•Descending from the pulpit Hildebrand continued the celebration of the Mass which his sermon had interrupted. When, according to the ritual, he consecrated the bread and wine the full sense of the enormity of the heresy burst upon him. His soul aflame with enthusiasm he raised the chalice above his head in the sight of all "and thus compelled the crowd to render homage to the Real Presence."

The lesson was not lost upon the Church which always appropriates to its service aught that conduces to the glory of God. In the canon of the Mass the uplifting of the Host in view of the congregation is still observed.

• When in one country the Masses cease as the day advances they are commencing in another, and thus all over the world there is "a continuous sacrifice and uplifting of the hands." In each of these celebrations is the movement of Hildebrand repeated and a bell rung to warn the people of the solemn act about to take place. The chalice is lifted to the forehead, significant of the fact that at that moment the intellect bows to faith and acknowledges the Presence of its God. "Thus the gesture remains in the liturgy," remarks a Protestant writer, "and partakes of immortality."

Hildebrand's efforts to restore order and discipline among the French clergy, both lay and cloistered, were everywhere marked with a signal success. "He set about reducing to a perfectly organised system the idea of the supremacy of the Church over the State and the Pope over the Church." His zeal was contagious and imparted itself alike to the Bishops and to the flocks committed to their charge. His enthusiasm roused the careless from the indifference into which they had unconsciously fallen, and his example inspired them with somewhat of his own spirit of high resolve.

He had scarcely concluded his mission when, to the regret of all France, he received urgent messages recalling him to Rome. Events of great moment were unfolding themselves, and it was necessary for the temporal well-being of the Church that someone should be at hand to assume the responsibility of their direction.

The first of these incidents was the unexpected death of *the Emperor.*

The Pontiff had repaired to Germany, at the invitation of the monarch, in order to effect a reconciliation with several of the nobles who had revolted from their allegiance. He had fulfilled his mission and spent Easter with Henry, the last that either lived to celebrate, and had scarcely returned to Rome when the news of his friend's death reached him.

When still in the fulness of manhood, and with a glorious future before him, the Emperor had passed away, leaving behind him a character so remarkable for the observance of his religion that the Church has made the additon of "Pious" to his name. The heir to the crown was a son then in his seventh year who, under the title of Henry IV. became thus early and unhappily the head of an imperial court in a war-like and corrupt age. He was at first entrusted to the care of his mother—a relative of the French king. Agnes was a highly-cultivated, religious and amiable woman, but totally unfit to guide so wilful a spirit as that of the little monarch. He was a child of strong will, passionate and proud, but also vain and weak with a varying temperament which needed a firm and judicious training, and of this the Empress was incapable. Still less was she successful in State policy, and her ignorance and mismanagement of public affairs fostered that disaffection among the nobles which led in after years to their rebellion against the throne.

Such was the state of affairs which preceded Hildebrand's recall, which was rendered the more imperative from the failing health of the Pontiff. The death of the Emperor was a great blow to one of such a clinging nature as Victor, and it became evident, even to the most careless observer, that he would not long survive his friend. The Pope was naturally delicate, and he had been so unsparing of his strength that, although he was still in the prime of life, he became completely prostrated by the two years' labour of his pontificate. The news of his illness at such a crisis caused regret and uneasiness throughout Italy and especially in Tuscany.

Beatrice sent him an invitation to Florence, whither at her urgent entreaty he repaired in hopes of restoring his constitution which was, however, shattered beyond all hopes of recovery. "In the leafy valley of the Arno, in a gentle, undulating country, amid low hills covered with vineyards," he lingered for a while until, to the great grief of Matilda and her mother, his gentle spirit passed away on July 28, 1057.

The freedom of the Church lay near Victor's heart, and while on the sick-bed, from which he was aware he would rise no more on earth, he occupied his mind in revolving which among the clergy would contribute in the largest measure of success to her emancipation.

It was usual at that period for the last days of the Pontiffs to be distressed by the responsibility of nominating a successor who would protect the rights and privileges pertaining to the Holy See. Their wearied brains were not allowed the repose which they sought in vain, but were constantly reviewing the situation, not as regarded themselves, but as it most affected the welfare of the Church. At the present day ecclesiastical law relieves the Pontiffs of this pressing care, and even makes it impossible for them to nominate their successors who are exclusively elected by the votes of the Cardinals.

To Victor's satisfaction the choice was not difficult to make, and having fixed upon the man best fitted to undertake the load of pontifical care, he was desirous that there should be no obstacle placed in the way of his election.

At the summons of the Pope, Hildebrand and the Cardinals repaired immediately to Tuscany to consult with him on the subject which engrossed his thoughts, and, as in the case of his predecessor, held their council around his dying bed.

Victor suggested to their deliberation the name of one whom he believed would prove a worthy and capable occupant of the chair of St Peter, and proceeded to lay before them the reasons for his selection.

Some time previously, when making a pontifical journey

throughout Italy, he had occasion more than once to avail himself of the hospitality of the monks of Monte Cassino, one of whom was destined to be his successor.

The monastery, built upon the site of a temple dedicated to Apollo, was situated upon the slopes of a mountain about fifty miles from Naples. It was founded by St Benedict early in the sixth century, and one of its branches was that of Cluny, in which retreat Hildebrand had been trained.[1]

Monte Cassino was renowned for the fine arts which were nurtured within its cloisters, where the monks especially excelled in the illuminations of manuscripts and in music. Here, too, with neat caligraphy and with much painstaking and labour, were compiled the chronicles and annals of that and previous times, which have been preserved and which have proved of invaluable service to succeeding historians and antiquarians.

During his visits to this centre of industry, the Pontiff had been much impressed by the learned conversation, courtly manners and sanctity of one of the brethren.

This was Junian Frederic of the house of Lorraine, a brother of Beatrice and a near relative of the young German King.

In those days there were but two professions open to scions of noble families, that of arms or theology. Frederic being of too weakly a constitution to enter upon the hardships of a military training had entered the cloister when young. There he remained, rather as a student than a monk, since he had bound himself by no vows to the Benedictine Order.

Victor was so charmed by the prince's piety and by his desire to enter upon the service of the Church, that on his last visit he had raised him to the dignity of Cardinal priest.

[1] At one time there were no less than 37,000 houses which belonged either to the Benedictine Order or its branches. History assures us that their inmates have at different periods included saints, popes, emperors, empresses, kings, queens, princes, princesses, writers of note and representatives of every branch of literature, art and science, who have embraced the rules of their Order.

This was the man whom the Pope suggested as his successor, and his dying wishes were complied with by the unanimity of the council.

Cardinal Frederic, totally unconscious of the honour intended for him, was serenely happy in the life he had chosen and in which, except for occasional visits to his sister and her child, he was oblivious of all the world. Absorbed in his studies and his devotions he had given no thought to ecclesiastical affairs beyond the monastery, and his absence from Victor's bedside had left him in ignorance of his election. When, therefore, the brethren interrupted his musings with the astounding intelligence it fell upon him with the suddenness and shock of an earthquake.

In the prince-Cardinal there existed no pride of race or family, and his gentle, retiring disposition resembled that of Beatrice, to whom he was much attached. His simple soul clung to his retreat with the pertinacity of ivy and could only be torn thence by an irresistible force against which it was useless to appeal. This was, in fact, the ordeal to which he was subjected, for so pertinaciously did he refuse to quit his cell that the Cardinals were obliged to have him conveyed thence by resolute bearers. In this ignominious fashion he was conducted to the council, which somewhat impatiently had awaited his arrival in Rome. Frederic found the streets lined with people who, however much they sympathised with his reluctance to accept his august office, could not fail to be struck by the noble appearance of the Pope-elect.

On his entrance into the council chamber the Cardinals rose to their feet and greeted him with every token of cordial respect. Taking his humility, a rare virtue in those days, as a fresh proof of his fitness, they elected him to fill the throne in the very city where the Cæsars had ruled in their overbearing pride.

Once again Matilda, now a demure maiden who had entered upon her twelfth year, was present at the coronation of a Pontiff, the excitement of the proceedings being much enhanced by the happiness of meeting her friend Hildebrand.

Once again, accompanied by her mother, she formed part of a vast and mixed assemblage drawn from all parts of Italy and Europe. Mingled together in picturesque confusion were Cardinals, Bishops and abbots, princes, nobles and distinguished members of the laity who had come to be present at the impressive ceremony.

The long procession, which included the Tuscan princesses, escorted by a cavalcade of knights, slowly wound its way to San Giovanni Laterano or St John Lateran. This building, founded by Constantine in 319, was overthrown by an earthquake nearly six hundred years later, but rose from its ruins to be the Metropolitan church of the Holy See, the "Mother and Head of the churches."[1] For a thousand years it was the residence of the Popes and within its walls they were crowned and inducted into the possession of St Peter's throne.

Hither, then, the procession wended its way through the dusty streets of Rome, followed by the deafening shouts of the holiday-loving citizens. The only heart which failed to participate in the universal rejoicings was that which beat within the breast of the Pontiff himself.

Regardless alike of his repeated and fervent protests and his evident reluctance to ascend the throne, he was publicly crowned under the title of Stephen IX., amid the acclamations of the jubilant crowd.

Once the ceremony was concluded Stephen realised that it was useless, and even harmful to the Church, to prolong his resistance. With a farewell sigh for the peaceful cell he had quitted for ever, he proceeded with a wise determination to take up the threads of duty as they came nearest to his hand.

His reign, though unfortunately brief in its duration, was a very busy one and justified, by its prudent application of ecclesiastical law, the choice which the late Pontiff had made of a worthy successor. With statesman-like policy he set himself to follow in the footsteps of his predecessors, who

[1] *Mater et Caput ecclesiarium.*

had, each and all felt the need of reform in the conduct of Papal elections. Especially he directed his attention to the drastic enforcement of the rules of their orders in the various monasteries and communities, and passed severe laws which prohibited the clergy to marry. "It was not enough," remarks the historian, "that the Pontiff himself was a man of purity; he required that the lowest clerics should lead a spotless life."

In carrying out his plans Stephen had an able coadjutor in Peter Damian, who, though unwillingly, had at the express desire of the Pope accepted the See of Ostia. The Bishop's observance of strict discipline had given him a European celebrity and caused him to be held in reverential respect by those whose long-continued habits of self-indulgence prevented them from following his example. "They admired in him," humorously remarks the critic, "the virtues which they were incapable of imitating." The prelate himself writes as follows of the times in which he lived: "The days of modesty, mortification and sacerdotal severity are gone. I am ashamed to mention still more disgraceful disorders—hunting, hawking and the like passion for games of chance which transform a Bishop into a buffoon. One day when I was travelling with the Bishop of Florence[1] I was told that he was playing a game of chess. I was shocked to the heart and took an early opportunity to show him how unbecoming such an amusement was in a man whose hand offers up the body of our Lord, and whose tongue renders him the mediator between God and man, especially as the canons forbid all games to a Bishop. He replied, 'They only forbid games of chance,' but I maintained that they apply to all. He at length yielded and begged me to impose a penance upon him. I ordered him to recite the psalter three times, to wash the feet of twelve poor men and to give each of them a penny, and thus to repair the sin he had committed with his hands and tongue."[2]

[1] Probably the late Pontiff Victor who had held that See.
[2] *Lives of the Popes.*

Stephen's other counsellor, Hildebrand, had returned shortly after the coronation to Cluny, where he was soon immersed in his studies and occupied with the affairs of the monastery. His spirit and influence, however, were still at St Peter's, and we learn that he mainly directed the ecclesiastical business transacted within the Papal precincts.

The Pontiff was incessantly engaged in combating the social and spiritual evils of his day and in framing laws for the guidance of his flock. Consumed with ardour for the cause of the Church he allowed himself no respite from the furtherance of her advancement. At length to the consternation of the Cardinals and the grief of his friends he began to show signs of collapse under the heavy strain. An illness followed which rendered him physically unfit to bear the many fatigues and anxieties which were inseparable from his position. Aware that he had but a feeble grasp upon the threads of life he became solicitous lest the throne he had so reluctantly ascended should in the event of his death remain vacant or become usurped by an unworthy occupant. Stephen, who had not fixed in his mind upon a successor, resolved to refer the matter to the wisdom of Hildebrand in whom he reposed, as had his predecessors, unlimited reliance. Trusting, therefore, to the discretion of the "Reformer," as he was designated, he caused him to be recalled to Rome, and after giving him full instructions despatched him as a Legate to Germany, in order that nomination might be made of a suitable candidate.

Stephen's own elevation to the Holy See followed so closely upon the death of the Emperor that it was probably owing to the unsettled condition of the government at that period that no reference to his accession appears to have been made to the imperial court. The embassy, therefore, is remarkable as being the last occasion on which Germany was asked to dominate the Papal elections. Henceforth the consent of the empire was not considered necessary to the crowning of a Pontiff freely chosen by the Cardinals and Roman citizens.

Scarcely had Hildebrand taken his departure from the Capitol than a new fear assailed the Holy Father. So nervous did he become lest any uproar should take place at his death that he convened a council to take steps to prevent any unseemly controversy between the spiritual and temporal powers.

Among the assembly present were the Tuscan princesses who had come on a visit to Rome in consequence of rumours of the Pope's illness. Beatrice was deeply concerned at the marked change which nine short months had made in the appearance of her beloved brother—the last of her family. Through tear-dimmed eyes she looked upon his bowed and emaciated form during his slow progress and noted with sorrow the tottering steps with which he ascended the throne for the last time. A smile of ineffable peace illumined his wan features as if already the burden of life were slipping from him, and already he was feeling the sense of relief at the approach of his well-earned rest. In weak but clear tones, which were distinctly heard by all, he made a public appeal to the Roman clergy and people that, in the event of the throne being vacant during the absence of the Legate, it should remain thus until his return.

It is possible that Stephen desired Hildebrand for his successor, and, it may be, had mentioned his wish to the newly-made Cardinal-deacon during the long consultation which preceded his departure. Hildebrand's logical reasonings against his elevation would naturally triumph over the personal feelings of the sick Pontiff. At the same time, Stephen may have nourished hopes that the imperial choice would coincide with his own, and therefore he himself made no further effort for his advancement. "Thus Hildebrand already reigned," says a contemporary of the Cardinal who wrote these words sixteen years before his coronation, "by his virtues, and none could hope for the pontifical throne except by conforming to the austere rules professed by that noble monk."

Stephen's predictions as to his approaching death were

unhappily fulfilled even sooner than he anticipated. In the hopes of renewing his failing strength he repaired, at the entreaties of Beatrice, to Tuscany. Alas! the fatigues of the journey and the unavoidable joltings over the rough and uneven roads were too much for his shattered frame, and when he reached Florence it was evident he was sinking fast. The Countess and Matilda, who but a short time since had been present at his coronation, remained with him to the last, and received his apostolic blessing. He passed away in the arms of Hugo, Abbot of Cluny, with his last breath repeating his charge to the clergy with regard to his successor.

"The opportunity thus unexpectedly presented to the factions of the day to elect a Pope of their own choosing," remarks the historian, "was too good to be lost," and Stephen's dying request was disregarded. Once before the powerful Counts of Tusculum, a district about fifteen miles from Rome, had furnished an anti-pope who, under the title of Benedict VIII., had usurped the chair of St Peter. They were now determined that a man named Conti, a relative of one of their partizans and of the same family as the former intruder, should be the new Pontiff. They collected their followers, who were armed and numerous, and set off for the city of the Cæsars.

Conti himself had no ambition to fill the post for which they desired him, but he was too much afraid of his turbulent supporters to venture to resist their intentions. He was hurried along unceremoniously in the midst of the excited crowd, who nowise tired with their long walk proceeded to St John Lateran and demanded an audience of the Bishop of Ostia.

It is not difficult to divine the reception which Peter Damian accorded the sacrilegious rabble. His austere features were sterner than usual as he confronted his unceremonious visitors and taunted them with the ignorance of their self-elected Pontiff. "I will," said he, "acknowledge him as the true and very true Pope if he can explain a simple verse of any Psalm or a line from any homily."[1]

[1] *Lives of the Roman Pontiffs*, by the Chevalier D'Artaud.

# Coronation of Anti-Pope

Somewhat abashed by the Bishop's scathing rebuke and by his determination not to place the tiara upon the head of their candidate, they dragged the unfortunate Conti, more dead than alive, to the house of the Archdeacon. The timid cleric, trembling at the sight of the fierce soldiers who threatened him with instant death if their demand was refused, had not the courage to resist, and crowned the almost fainting anti-pope under the name of Benedict X.

The news of the usurpation of the throne was not long in reaching the German Court where the Cardinal-Legate was at that very moment arranging for a successor to Stephen. He advised the Empress to end the unseemly state of affairs, so disastrous to Christian interests, by consenting to the election of his nominee. This was Gerard, Bishop of Florence, a native of Savoy, a province which then formed part of the Duchy of Burgundy.

Peter Damian describes Gerard as being a man of deep penetration and "of great virtue and learning." He testifies also in eulogistic terms to the merits of the Pope-elect, especially to his liberality in alms-giving.

The Empress, in the name of her child for whom she acted as Regent, readily agreed to the Legate's suggestion, and armed with this consent he repaired to Rome, where he found the anti-pope in possession of the throne.

Both Hildebrand and the Cardinals considered it undesirable to proceed with the election in Rome, for Conti had not yielded the tiara, in spite of all the persuasions and threats of the Bishops and clerics. His followers, who comprised the most unruly of the populace, were numerous, and only wanted a pretext to involve the whole city in an uproar.

Early in the year (1059) following Stephen's death, a general Council to consider the appointment of his successor was convened at Siena, which was included in the Marquisate of Beatrice.

The Countess and her daughter were present at the deliberations, which were of a most harmonious nature. The

nomination of the Bishop of Florence proposed by Hildebrand, and which had received the approbation of the Imperial Government, was hailed with enthusiasm, and he was accepted without a vote of dissent.

It cost Gerard many a sigh to leave the city where as its prelate he had spent so many happy years and where the news of his departure caused universal sorrow and regret. The Tuscan princesses, who knew and loved him well, sympathised with their countrymen in their grief at losing him, and were only consoled by the thought that he had been selected as their Pontiff.

When the election was concluded, Gerard took his leave of Beatrice and Matilda, with his hand outstretched in blessing over them and over the beautiful city he was quitting. He then, in company with Hildebrand and the Cardinals, proceeded on his way to Rome, escorted for miles by his weeping friends.

News of his approach flew like lightning, and on his appearance within sight of the city he was met by hundreds of the inhabitants, who came forth and conducted him in triumph to St John Lateran, which the anti-pope had vacated.

Conti, who does not appear to have asserted his authority by any public act, welcomed the change of affairs and readily yielded a throne he had no desire to fill. On hearing of the election of Gerard he quietly left the city and retired to a monastery in whose friendly shelter from political intrigues he died in the following April.

The citizens who had regarded Conti's usurpation with supreme indifference were not sorry to be released from an anti-pope for whom they entertained no feelings of respect, and upon whose incapacity for governing they looked with disdain.

The new Pontiff, who took the name of Nicholas II., was distinguished for his humility and unbounded charity. His courteous bearing and kindness of manner towards the humblest of his children soon won the hearts of a people

who, among their faults do not include that of ingratitude.

Nicholas was essentially the father of the poor. He sought them out in their homes and made their well-being his special care. On his elevation he devoted his attention to their social grievances and literally fulfilled his Lord's command to feed the sheep and lambs entrusted to his care. Not only did he allow himself to be approached at all times by his humble brethren without restraint, but his ear was ever open to the relation of their complaints and woes. Every day twelve old men presented themselves before the Pontiff, who divesting himself of his robes knelt before them, and, in imitation of our Divine Lord who first set this example of humility to His followers, washed their travel-worn feet.

From the very commencement of his reign the Pope was much troubled by the schisms of those who defended the marriage of ecclesiastics and also by the simoniacs who, especially in Germany, bought benefices and sold them again to the highest bidders.

The title which Nicholas II. had chosen at his coronation was singularly appropriate, for it was the name borne by "the founder of the supremacy of the Papal See." Following in the footsteps of his illustrious namesake, he endeavoured to carry out to the best of his ability his idea of the "exact observance of ecclesiastical discipline."

For this purpose he summoned a General Council, which met at Rome (1059), and at which one hundred and thirteen Bishops from all parts of Europe were present, and gave their consent to the decrees which were then passed. At the same Council was confirmed to the six Cardinals—or, as the name implies, "hinges of the Church"—the exclusive right of electing the Pontiff, the clergy and people giving a tacit consent. "This law," says Dean Milman, "wrested the power of nominating the Pope from the lower clergy, the turbulent barons, and transferred it to the College of Cardinals." The decree was passed by the unanimous votes of the assembly,

and at the head of the signatures occurs that of "*Hildebrand, monk and Cardinal-deacon.*"

Thus divided between the duties of his pontificate and his care of the poor passed away the last two years of Nicholas' life. Like his predecessors, his strength began to yield under the constant demands made upon it. His soul became filled with a desire that amounted to longing to revisit his beloved Florence, the Bishopric of which he still retained.

Beatrice, on hearing of this wish, at once made preparations respecting the journey of the sick Pontiff. Matilda, it is needless to say, looked forward with eagerness to meeting the Holy Father to whose religious instructions she had often listened with reverential interest.

Alas! it seemed as if the cares of the pontificate were to deprive her of the two best-known friends of her childhood. It was but two and a half years since her uncle, the gentle Pope Stephen, had come to Tuscany to die, and now it appeared as if Nicholas would soon follow his friend and fellow-Pontiff. The princesses escorted the invalid, and by their help and personal direction did much to alleviate the sufferings caused by the long and fatiguing journey of nearly two hundred miles.

The delight of Nicholas at revisiting his See seemed to renew his failing strength, and filled himself and his friends with hopes of his recovery. These expectations proved to be delusive, for no sooner had the excitement of his arrival somewhat lessened than the relapse came. Among his former flock, surrounded by his friends, his soul soared from the frail tenement from which it longed to be free. He died on July 27, 1061, "full of merits, virtues, wisdom, candour and pontifical vigour."

His remains were conveyed to the Vatican, followed by crowds of persons of all ranks, testifying by this touching attention their fervent affection for their Bishop and Pontiff, for he was both.

The long procession, headed by Beatrice and Matilda, included many of the poor to whom his sanctity and

liberality had endeared him. The tears and regrets of these humble children of the Church were a fitting tribute to the memory of their generous benefactor.

On the death of Nicholas the Cardinals held a solemn council for the election of his successor. In accordance with the decree to which he had given his assent, the late Pontiff had made no choice, but left the selection to be made and confirmed by the votes of the "hinges of the Church."

The conclave therefore made their decision, and once again the Marquisate of Tuscany was to yield a Pope who should fill the throne of St Peter.

Following the example of Hildebrand, the electors unanimously gave their votes to Anselm Badagius, Bishop of Lucca, a man of high talent and belonging to an illustrious Milanese family. He had been a student under the famous Lanfranc, and was one of the canons of St John Lateran. At the time of his call to fill the papal throne he was engaged in the erection in Lucca of a Cathedral which Beatrice desired should be dedicated to St Martin. To this building was afterwards confided for safe keeping a priceless treasure, a sad souvenir of our Lord's sufferings, which was wrought soon after His death by one of His disciples. This was a crucifix, carved in cedar according to tradition by the hands of Nicodemus and transferred from the Holy Land to Lucca in the eighth century.

For years Anselm had been the personal friend and spiritual director of Beatrice, who was much attached to the learned prelate. She had frequently availed herself of his advice in the training of her daughter, whose theological studies he had superintended. It was no small grief to the young princess thus to lose the third of her childhood's friends, and to be deprived of their teachings and sweet counsels.

Little did she dream that this election was to be a crisis in her life, and that its results were to be the turning-point in her history and in the history of the Church.

It was in October (1061), three months after the death of Nicholas, that the Cardinals gave their decision in favour of Anselm as his successor. The date is one to be remembered, since it was at this election that the new law of papal freedom was first brought into operation. Without any application to Germany, and without either the knowledge or sanction of the imperial court, Anselm was crowned as Pontiff under the title of Alexander II.

The Church had indeed asserted her rights. No longer was she to choose her Head at the bidding of the Emperors. Moreover, as has been truly remarked, there was no Emperor at the time. Henry IV., who had succeeded his father, was at this time but a lad of eleven years of age and too young to wear the imperial crown.

News of the innovation quickly spread and reached Agnes ere the accredited Legate arrived in Germany. The Empress was no longer Regent, the young King having been taken from her charge more than a year ago by Archbishop Hanno, in whose care he was at this time.

Although Agnes' authority was considerably diminished by the removal of her son, she was very indignant at what she deemed an infringement of the imperial prerogative. When, therefore, the envoy arrived from Rome, she refused to admit him to audience, and after waiting for some days in expectation of fulfilling his embassy, he returned with the seals of his despatches unbroken.

Determined, with all the arrogance of her rank, not to acknowledge the Pontiff thus freely chosen by the Cardinals, the Empress prepared at all costs to substitute one of her own nomination. She had heard that the Archbishop of Cologne, whom she considered to be her enemy, was in favour of Anselm, and that afforded an additional reason for opposing his election.

A meeting was held at Basle and Cadalous, Bishop of Parma, "a man of notorious reputation," was chosen as anti-pope, just twenty-eight days after the elevation of Anselm.

The choice was confirmed by Agnes in the name of the youthful King, and both men and money were freely placed at the disposal of Cadalous, who set out at the head of the German forces, intending to cross Tuscany on his way to Rome.

# Matilda, Countess of Tuscany

## CHAPTER IV

"A meteor wert thou in a darksome night
Yet shall thy name conspicuous and sublime
Stand in the spacious firmament of time
Fix'd as a star; such glory is thy right."—WORDSWORTH.

BEATRICE, though naturally of a sweet and yielding disposition, was not inclined to submit tamely to the daring inroad of the papal usurper into her dominions. She remembered with a sigh of regret that the death of Boniface her lord had deprived her of his powerful support, and that there was but the feeble arm of a woman to defend her rights. Godfrey, although grieved to wound the feelings of his wife, would give her no assurance of assistance. From strong motives of self-interest he preferred to remain neutral in the matter. He was unwilling to offend against the imperial court by taking up arms in favour of Alexander, since just at that time he desired especially to ingratiate himself with the Empress. She had but recently restored the disputed territories of Lotharingia to Godfrey the Younger, and he feared lest by any precipitate act he might hinder his son's advancement.

There was no such diffidence on the part of Matilda. Her youthful soul was aflame with patriotism and unswerving loyalty to the Holy See. She heard her step-father's decision with feelings of surprise and indignation, and became filled with a longing to take the reins of command into her own hands.

Putting aside the manuscripts to which in the tumultuous state of her mind she could no longer give her undivided attention, she proceeded with light but firm step to her

mother's apartment. Embracing her with all the demonstrative affection of girlhood, she besought her not to suffer such an outrage to the papal throne nor to permit the indignity of an unopposed invasion. With a lip trembling with the force of her emotion, and with flashing eye through which shone forth the spirit of her forefathers, she implored Beatrice to summon her vassals. Her mother reminding her that there was no one to whose command she could commit her people, the heroic girl begged that she herself might have the glory of leading her countrymen. Beatrice looked down with pride upon the animated features of her daughter, and read therein such resolve and power of will, that she could not find it in her heart to check her generous glow of patriotism, and yielded to her request.

The response to Beatrice's call to arms was instant and unanimous. From cities, towns, villages, from plains and mountain passes, the loyal Tuscans hastened at the bidding of their liege lady.

The numbers of these willing but untrained recruits were augmented by the knights who frequented her court, and to whose charge she committed the care of her youthful and intrepid daughter.

Preparations for war in those days were very simple and quickly made. No changes of accoutrements were required, except those of the knightly warriors and those of their personal attendants who were being trained for the military profession. The sword, the ponderous battle-axe, the mighty club and the cross-bar of the Normans were the principal arms used in the field. The town of Pistoja had not yet furnished the murderous weapons which were afterwards manufactured here. There was none of the artillery or cannon of the present time to hinder the quick passage of the men, and gunpowder was not introduced until nearly two centuries after Matilda had passed away. Except among the Normans or in the standing armies supported by and commanded by nobles who were attached to the European courts, there was no regular training for the field. Military

discipline did not even in these instances extend to the hired soldiers who followed the camps and helped to swell the numerical force of the troops, whose movements they often impeded rather than assisted.

In Tuscany Beatrice had her own company of knights and men-at-arms on whose fidelity she could rely, and who had served under Boniface her late husband. She supplemented these as we have seen by her subjects in the villages and towns, and by peasants from the mountainous districts. These men, untrammelled by uniforms to which they were unaccustomed and which would have but impeded their freedom of action, were soon equipped. Seizing upon their bows, to the use of which they had been trained from childhood, and filling their pockets with pebbles in the slinging of which they were adepts, they hurried to join their comrades in the valleys. The lowland peasants were no less quickly ready. They armed themselves with various agricultural implements, which though innocent in times of peace, inflicted deadly and often mortal wounds when delivered with muscular energy against their foes. They provided themselves with huge portions of black bread and some fruit, and taking a tender farewell of their families were able without further preface or preparation to march to the field.

Among her accomplishments Matilda had from childhood practised the art of horsemanship. In this exercise her fearlessness, her powers of endurance and her vigorous constitution rendered her an expert. So remarkable was her influence upon the animals she rode, that by her firm kindness she controlled the temper of the most restless steeds and rendered them obedient and docile.[1]

Fears for her child's safety began to fill the mind of Beatrice with gloomy forebodings, and gladly, if it were possible, would she have recalled her consent to her departure on so perilous an undertaking. With many entreaties to the

[1] This characteristic of Matilda has been remarked by mediæval painters, who have represented her as "seated on the back of a fiery horse, whom she is holding in check."

knights to carefully guard the princess, she assured them of her prayers during the trying ordeal through which they were about to pass, and with many tears took, as she believed, a last farewell of her beloved daughter.

Matilda, with the buoyant confidence of youth, entertained no fears as to the issue of the conflict which she anticipated would end the tyranny under which the Church and Italy had so long groaned. Embracing her mother, she sprang lightly upon her horse, which she rode with an easy and graceful seat, and placed herself at the head of her troops.

In this manner did a girl of fifteen, of high culture, and delicately brought up far from scenes of strife and bloodshed, overcome the natural timidity and reserve of her sex, and "expose herself to all the horrors of actual war." Thus, without any apprehension of personal danger, did she place herself as a bulwark in defence of her Church and country. Thus she entered upon a struggle for their interests, which lasted until her death, and in which though unaided by any of the potentates of Europe, she was ultimately the victor.

So little time had the preparations occupied, that scarcely had Cadalous crossed the north-west frontier of Tuscany than he was confronted with Matilda's small but determined band. His troops far outnumbered the Tuscans, but the promptness and freshness with which the latter advanced gave them the advantage over his men, who were fatigued from their toilsome journey over the mountain passes.

With shouts of "St Peter and Matilda!" "St Peter and Matilda!" the loyal mountaineers broke from all restraint, and rushing forward threw themselves upon the straggling ranks of the Germans with that daring and fearlessness of danger to which a life of peril had inured them. A fearful hand-to-hand struggle ensued, and for a time nothing was heard but a confused mingling of the hoarse shouts and curses with which the imperial officers urged forward their men, with the inspiriting watchwords of the combatants and the groans of the wounded. Regardless of their exposed persons and the variety of their instruments of war,

the Tuscans fought fiercely, and with all the force of their sinewy arms inflicted ghastly and deadly injuries upon their antagonists.

What were Matilda's feelings during the affray, it is difficult to discover. During the pauses of the conflict, when the Tuscans were ready to drop from very weariness, the clear tones of the young princess stimulated them to fresh exertions and fresh acts of heroism. The tax upon her courage was not of long duration, and to her intense relief she detected uncertainty in the movements of the enemy. Her heart beat almost to suffocation and her breath came quickly as with dilating eye she saw her brave men rapidly gaining ground.

The imperial troops, disorganised by the unexpected and savage nature of the onrush, wavered in their advance, and after a short engagement were hopelessly repulsed and fled in wild disorder.

Matilda was left master of the field, and as soon as she perceived that the enemy was in full retreat she gave orders for the return of her men from the pursuit of the stragglers to prevent unnecessary bloodshed. Nor did she quit the scene of her victory until she was assured that the wounded of both sides were well tended and the helpless conveyed to the village which nestled under the shadow of Canossa. This humane duty performed the princess, who had sent messengers to allay the fears of her mother, rode with eager haste towards the Castle, from the battlements of which Beatrice had watched the progress of the conflict.

Springing with agility from her horse the worthy descendant of a line of warriors rushed with the impetuosity of girlhood into the enfolding arms which were extended to embrace her. Beatrice, trembling with joy and pride, pressed the valiant maiden convulsively to her heart, while in faltering accents she thanked her people for the loyalty and bravery they had displayed, and congratulated them on the victorious issue.

The anti-pope, frustrated in his design of proceeding

through Tuscany, hurried from the field almost at the beginning of the engagement. Fearful of being pursued by the infuriated Italians, but still determined to press on to Rome, he made a detour by way of the Marches.

The Archbishop, however, was disappointed of the triumphant entry which he believed would have crowned his expedition. News of his repulse by Matilda had, however, reached the city before him, and the inhabitants hastily closed their gates at his approach. In no enviable frame of mind he fixed his encampment without the walls of the unfriendly capital, and there awaited with ill-concealed impatience the arrival of his straggling army. From their post of vantage the citizens were able to amuse themselves by annoying and defying the foe, who were too disorganised by their hurried retreat from Tuscany to effect an entrance by force. Unable to retaliate, the Germans contented themselves with vowing to take a full revenge upon their merciless tormentors when once they became masters of the situation.

Military commanders in those days had no charts or maps to give them topographical information of the countries through which they marched, and unexpected difficulties arose at almost every step. The German soldiers, who had been hopelessly dispersed by the sudden attack of Matilda, were therefore considerably at a loss to know which direction the fugitive anti-pope had taken. "Mountain passes, deep ravines and torrents, sometimes fordable, at others impassable for even those born on their stony banks, presented themselves at almost every turn." It was in vain," continues the historian, "that they endeavoured, even at the sword's point, to gain the services of the Tuscans as guides; they were too devoted to Matilda to be tempted to her betrayal." That "all roads lead to Rome," was not then a recognised proverb, although in this case the axiom held good. The imperial forces, travelling by routes more or less direct, arrived in separate detachments before the walls of the capital even while Matilda in her anxiety for the Pontiff's safety was pressing close upon them."

Matilda's temperament was so equable that not even the excitement of actual war had power to overthrow the even balance of her well-regulated mind. Aware that Cadalous had early quitted the field, she feared, lest by taking the Romans unawares, he should have succeeded in gaining entrance to the city.

There was no time to be lost, and finding that her step-father still refused to take command, the courageous girl prepared at all hazards to go to the rescue of the Pontiff, whose life might even then be in danger.

Beatrice, in an agony of maternal solicitude, refused to remain behind, and the princesses immediately set out, accompanied by a body of picked men-at-arms to form an escort for Alexander's retreat to Canossa.

When the cavalcade neared Rome, a sight met the eyes of Beatrice and Matilda which caused them to forget their weariness and removed from their minds all apprehensions for the Pontiff's safety. Before them lay the pitched tents of the Germans, and the fact of the troops not having entered the city, was sufficient evidence that the Romans had been warned of their approach in time to be on their guard.

Finding there was no need for the continuation of a journey which would possibly expose them to another encounter, the princesses retraced their way to Canossa ere the German outposts had warning of their presence.

Although in those days news travelled with tardy feet, the fame of Matilda's exploit had spread with incredible rapidity, and her return was heralded with exuberant demonstrations of joy. Her people greeted her with deafening shouts, and her name was hailed with acclamation as the watchword of liberty. She became the centre round which rallied all who were prepared to defend their religion and country.

It is difficult to realise that the heroine of this universal ovation was but young, and that at an age when most girls of modern times have scarcely quitted the school-room, she had commanded an army in the field. "Nothing was now

wanting to this daughter of the Margraves," exclaims the poet in an outburst of enthusiasm, "high birth, youth, virtue, beauty, and victorious troops."

The following description of Matilda as she appeared at the time will give an idea, however faint, of the form and features which appealed to the chivalrous instincts of men of all grades. Charmed with her grace and regal carriage, dazzled by her beauty, astonished at the variety of her attainments, amazed at the refinement of her home and the rich estates to which she was heir, no wonder that poets and painters have lauded in verse and picture the amiable, pious and generous Matilda, Countess of Tuscany.[1]

She possessed, we are told, a great profusion of dark hair, which was prevented from encroaching upon her intellectual forehead by a kind of tiara, or high comb, which confined it in massive coils on her shapely head. Her upper lip was full and short, and her eyes large, of a sparkling black, and wonderfully expressive. She was tall and well and strongly built, carrying herself with grace and dignity, which, together with her sweet-toned, sympathetic voice, won for her the respect and admiration of all.

Inheriting the pride and courage of her race, and gifted with a rich imagination, her very nature, active and poetic as it was, rendered her a true and earnest patriot. She loved her country with a lively and constant affection, which neither misfortune nor age diminished nor dimmed. "My heart," exclaimed she in a sudden transport of feeling, "burns with an ardent love for my Church and my Italy."

Already the fame of the beauty and wealth of Matilda had reached the foreign courts, and speculations were rife as to which fortunate prince should be confided the control of her extensive property. Her step-father was desirous of her union with his son, Le Bossu, to whom the Empress had recently restored the Duchy of Lotharingia to which he was heir. Anxious to make his position more secure, ere she

[1] Donizo. [2] Ibid.

should have made a choice of the many offers for her hand, the Duke proposed her marriage with Le Bossu as a condition of his help in defending the papal throne.

Godfrey was not wrong in supposing that the motive he brought forward was the one most calculated to have weight both with Matilda and her mother, and one that would silence the objections which might be raised by their clerical advisers.

In the meantime, the situation in Rome was reaching a crisis. Cadalous, whose pride had been "keenly mortified," and his dreams of future power dispelled by the unexpected check to his advance, was becoming tired of waiting before the closed gates. The discipline of the camp was relaxed, and the soldiers having no other method of disposing of their time and energies, became turbulent and beyond the control of their officers. Spreading themselves over the surrounding districts they became utterly reckless and disgraced themselves by acts of violence which would have shamed the most lawless freebooters of the period. With unrestrained license they waylaid and robbed pilgrims to the city, who had come from afar, through many perils and privations, to obtain the Sovereign Pontiff's blessing and to lay their offerings at his feet. The unfortunate travellers no sooner congratulated themselves on the successful termination of their toilsome journey, than they were set upon by the rough soldiery. Not only were they despoiled of their property, but in spite of their prayers, lamentations and protests, they were driven back with every species of insult that cruelty could devise.

The anti-pope was most unhappy in the midst of his unruly partizans, and began to despair of ever securing the papal chair upon which his rival seemed firmly fixed. It was clear that to prolong the siege was a mere waste of time under the present conditions. He began to meditate upon measures by which to effect an entrance, but none were practicable. His army was too disorganised to trouble about the matter, and not even the tempting bait of un-

limited spoil to be gained, would induce them to make an attack upon the city. Cadalous therefore withdrew his forces as far north as he dared to venture, and there waited until his army should be strengthened by promised reinforcements from Lombardy, a province which favoured German policy.

The enthusiastic reception accorded to Matilda, which was sufficient to have turned the head of many a more matured warrior, had no effect upon the simple-hearted princess, in whom motives of self-aggrandisement found no place. Nor did she allow herself to become exalted on account of her victory, the result of which had been merely a delay in the premeditated attack of the German forces upon Rome. She was fully aware that a girl, inexperienced in military tactics and ignorant of the science of war, could not hope for a continuance of success against a well-seasoned and disciplined foe.

The only means by which the independence of the tiara could be preserved was by calling in the aid of an ally. The Normans, who were already firmly settled in Italy, would only have been too glad to avail themselves of a pretext for entering Rome, but the unlicensed freedom of their manners and their utter disregard of the rights of property would have made their presence a doubtful blessing. The citizens would rather have a Pontiff thrust upon them by Germany than place their national and priceless treasures of architecture at the mercy of such wild spirits. Nor would Matilda's patriotism have suffered her to repel the advances of the invader by inviting a foreign power to enter either Tuscany or Rome.

Help lay but in one direction. Her step-father, who had been used from childhood to scenes of blood and strife, had promised to lead her army on the fulfilment of one condition, and on no other terms would he assume the command.

Regarding the Pontiff with reverence as the Vicar of Christ, the princess had considered it a duty to risk her life for his sake and for the Church he represented. Her

marriage therefore with Le Bossu, which would be a solely political undertaking, was in her opinion not too great a sacrifice to make for the furtherance of the same ends. She was unhappily cognisant from her daily contact with Godfrey that from the utter incompatibility of their natural characteristics there never could exist that sympathy which forms the true bond of union.

The knowledge that she would be bound to a husband whose tastes were so dissimilar, and who had never sought her love, must have inflicted many a wound upon the affectionate heart of a maiden so proudly sensitive as was this daughter of the Margraves.

Not without long and serious deliberation did Matilda enter upon the course which was to change the whole tenor of her life. Many an hour, when the inmates of the Castle were sunk in slumber, did she spend in earnest thought, viewing the situation not merely in regard to herself, but as concerning the welfare of the Church. Many an hour she knelt in the Chapel and there, in the presence of her Lord, prayed to be guided aright in this momentous crisis of her life. Many consultations, too, she held with her mother, when their tears mingled together, and Beatrice pressed her child to her heart with words of comfort which grief rendered almost inaudible.

The innate delicacy of the Tuscan princesses prevented them from applying to the Pontiff and abiding by his decision. Alexander, in his tender regard for his young pupil would, as they knew, have found it difficult to advise her to a union which would make her miserable, and which was to be entered upon for his sake.

They therefore sought the opinion of their spiritual advisers, who, while fully acknowledging the sacrifice of her life's happiness which Matilda would be called upon to make, did not attempt to dissuade her from the marriage. Fortified by the blessing of her mother and the approbation of the Church, she at length consented to give her hand as the price of the independence of the pontifical throne.

Godfrey the Younger received the news with the indifference which was habitual to him, although he was not insensible to the advantages which would accrue to himself by his marriage with the wealthiest heiress in Europe.

His father at once prepared to fulfil his part of the stipulation, and in an incredibly short space of time the Tuscan army was collected and ready to start.

The two princesses, with a small retinue of a select corps of men-at-arms, together with Godfrey, who directed the movements of the troops, thereupon proceeded with all despatch to Rome.

To the surprise of all, there were no signs of the enemy, who had removed their camp from before the gates of the city. Matilda, overjoyed at the comparative safety of the Pontiff, forgot alike her fears and the dark cloud which hung like a pall between her and the freedom and bliss of her maidenhood. Hers was not a nature to brood over misfortunes, and as she sprang from her horse to kneel at the feet of the Holy Father, she was, what she appeared to be, one of the happiest creatures whom God has made.

Alexander smilingly raised the princess from her lowly position, and with precious words of encouragement praised the heroic girl for her zeal and patriotism.

The Roman nobles who crowded round were struck with admiration at the grace and beauty of the young warrior, as with burning cheeks and downcast eyes she listened to their extravagantly turned phrases of congratulation.

Donizo, the chaplain, who was present at this touching scene, describes in glowing terms the enthusiastic reception accorded to his beloved pupil. "At the arrival of Godfrey," said he, "the town began to breathe, but at the sight of Matilda, armed for the cause of St Peter, they determined not to await the arrival of the enemy but to march forward to meet them."

In the meantime Cadalous, who had considerably augmented his forces from Lombardy, was on his way to lay siege to Rome, when, to his chagrin, news reached him

that he had been forestalled. Godfrey and Matilda, so the tidings ran, had gone to the relief of Alexander, and their army was already within the city walls.

The German commander was not deterred from his purpose by this unlooked-for rebuff—on the contrary, the prospect of securing such valuable prisoners was a fresh incentive to action. Confident of an easy victory, and delighted at the prospect of the reward in store, the imperial troops pressed on in eager anticipation to seize their prey.

When they arrived within a short distance from the Capitol before which they were about to encamp, they beheld, to their great astonishment, a regularly-organised army advancing to intercept their further progress.

Matilda's forces joined to those furnished by the Romans were numerically superior to those of the enemy. On the other hand the latter were better armed and more experienced. These men, seasoned by years of severe training, were masters of military tactics and fully able to take advantage of the unskilled movements of their antagonists.

Fortified by the justness of their cause, both political aud religious, the Tuscans went boldly forward in the name of the Church, whose rights they defended. Realising what serious results hung upon the issue of the battle, they maintained a stubborn and protracted resistance to the advance of the foe.

In vain the imperial veterans, who had treated the peasant army with disdain, attempted to break through the irregular masses before them. Like a huge wave which recedes only to gather fresh power did the Italians throw themselves with irresistible energy upon their ranks. It was impossible to proceed in the face of such overwhelming numbers, and they suffered severely from the wounds inflicted upon them by the murderous weapons of the sturdy mountaineers.

Hour after hour the battle waged with uncertain issue and with the relative positions of the combatants unchanged.

During all that time the young Countess, by her presence

and undaunted enthusiasm, kept up the courage of her followers. She rode up and down in their midst, cheering the hearts of those who appeared to be losing ground, and exhorting them by words of encouragement to persevere. Whenever she saw signs of flagging she sustained the waning courage of the wearied men, and by her commendations and the example of her own fearlessness transformed them into veritable heroes.

With an utter disregard of personal safety she made the wounded her special charge, and assisted their removal from the field to a place of security. She bound up their wounds with tender and deft fingers, whispering the while consolation and praise in the ears of the sufferers, and relieving the anxieties of the dying, by promising that their families should be her care.

At length Nature could bear no more. The shadows of evening fell softly upon the tired troops who, hidden from each other by a merciful darkness, snatched a few hours of fitful repose.

As soon as the first rays of the sun heralded the approach of day the armies again renewed the strife, of which the issue still remained uncertain.

At length the patience of the Germans, which had for nearly nineteen hours been strained by the harassing movements of their antagonists, was exhausted. To the relief of both sides they ceased hostilities, and declaring the victory in favour of Matilda, desired that a treaty might be entered into with the princess. The terms, which included the retirement of Cadalous from his pretensions, were hastily drawn up and agreed to, and the imperial army, in spite of the angry protests of the anti-pope, commenced an orderly and unmolested retreat.

No exultant feelings which under such peculiar circumstances would not only have been pardonable but even permissible found place in the mind of Matilda, whose eyes were overflowing with grief for the sufferings of the wounded. Now that the excitement was over she had leisure to look

round upon her people who had fought so valiantly for their homes and liberties. Alas! she missed many familiar faces from the devoted band, and her heart ached for the widows and orphans who would look in vain for the return of the beloved one by whose toil they had been sustained.

Godfrey, who had meanwhile recalled the troops and arranged them in something like military order, considered his part of the agreement fulfilled and, approaching his step-daughter, intimated that he was ready to accompany her to Rome. She waited, however, to superintend the removal of the wounded to the city, which fortunately was not far distant, ere quitting the sad scene which was for ever graven upon her memory. With a last farewell glance, dimmed with tears at the bodies of the fallen as they were borne past for burial, she remounted her patient steed and rode by the side of Godfrey to the Capitol.

News of their success had preceded the arrival of the victors, and long ere their appearance the fears of Beatrice for her child had been set at rest by assurances of her safety.

The whole city was moved, and the inhabitants with one accord poured forth to escort the heroine from this her second battle in defence of the Holy See. She was, as the chronicler remarks, "the first woman since the fall of the Roman Empire of whom account must be taken in history."

Headed by the Pontiff and the Countess, a triumphant procession was formed to receive "the young warrior in whom," says Donizo, "all had trust." Her youth, her personal grace, appealed to every heart. She was greeted with the blessing of Alexander which he publicly bestowed amid the deafening plaudits of an immense and jubilant assemblage.

After staying for a few hours in the Capitol, the two princesses and Godfrey, followed by the congratulations and thanks of all Rome, from Pope to peasant, returned to Tuscany. Here Matilda received a no less brilliant ovation from the welcoming crowds which awaited her on her passage through the Marquisate.

The population of the cities and towns poured forth to

meet her, and the hearty shouts which arose on all sides formed a fitting accompaniment to the triumphal entry of the daughter of the warlike Margraves.

At length the journey, rendered the more fatiguing from the intense excitement which had prevailed during its progress, was ended. Canossa was reached, and the gates of the Castle were flung wide open to admit the " beautiful and courageous saviour of her country."

The anxious friends of the victorious band, for once unrestrained by the presence of the Countess and her beautiful daughter, could scarcely control their frenzied delight at the return of their relatives and acquaintances. For many of these awaited a sad disappointment, as they failed to see amidst the gay throng the faces of those who had quitted their homes in buoyant hopes of a successful and speedy return. No more would the mountains echo their joyous song or shout; their places by the hearth were vacant; they had given their lives in defence of Church and country. No newspapers in those days announced in their lists of casualties the fate of those who were killed or wounded, and by this means prepared the mourners to realise their loss, and no details of the conflict had preceded the return of the troops.

All at once, as if by magic, silence succeeded the clamour, and in the stillness, broken only by the suppressed weeping of those whom the war had bereft, and audible to all, were heard the sweet clear tones of Beatrice. With a few well-chosen words of thanks she disbanded her army, and the men, gratified by the praise and substantial rewards by which she showed her appreciation of their loyalty, rejoined their friends and dispersed to their homes.

For the first time in her life the towers of Canossa clearly outlined against the clear blue sky which robbed them of their gloom had been an unwelcome sight to Matilda. As the joyous shouts of the retreating peasants lingered in her ears her feelings threatened to master her, and it was with difficulty she restrained her emotion. A more dreadful

ordeal awaited her than the conflict from which she had triumphantly issued.

Standing in the flower of her youth, on the threshold of womanhood, the prospect of spending the long life which lay before her with such an uncongenial companion as Godfrey must have been appalling. She had, however, counted the cost, and she did not hesitate to fulfil the conditions which had secured her step-father's assistance to the cause of the Church.

On her return she sought an interview with her future husband, and with a manner softened by modesty into timid graciousness, but which failed to touch the selfish spirit of Le Bossu, she gave him her hand. Matilda made one stipulation however with regard to her marriage, to which Godfrey not unwillingly agreed. It was that she should never be required to quit her beloved Italy, to reside in her consort's country. As the wedded pair stood before the altar it seemed to the spectators more fitting that the bride, in all the glory of her fifteen summers and fresh from the field of battle, should have stood in the place of the bridegroom. Her tall, elegant figure appeared to throw into bolder relief the diminutive size and natural deformity of Godfrey, which had earned for him the title of "Bossu." Nor were their characters less dissimilar. The Duke of Lotharingia[1] as he was now called, was of an intensely selfish nature. Though endowed with remarkable mental abilities, he suffered them to be clouded by such profound dissimulation that, history assures us, not even his closest friends had any idea of his real intentions. That the union with his child-wife was not only unsought by him, but even distasteful, is evident from the fact that no sooner was the ceremony concluded than he set out for Lotharingia. He entered at once into possession of his patrimony, and in return for the favour which the Empress had shown him, he devoted himself to her cause. Regardless of his wife's feelings, he joined the party hostile to the Pontiff,

[1] Lotharingia comprised the territory between the Rhine, Maas and Scheldt, afterwards known as Lower Lorraine.

against whom he employed his talents in successive intrigues. The antagonism did not spring from any personal dislike towards Alexander, for his schemes were also carried on against his successor in the papal chair, but had for its object the suppression and subjugation of the Church which he represented.

Matilda had regarded the union with the Duke as a sacrifice of herself to the Holy See, but she was yet womanly enough to feel deeply wounded by his desertion. Her religion which was her comfort was at the same time her monitor, and forbade her to harbour feelings of resentment against the man to whom, in the presence of God, she had been united in the sacrament of marriage.

Though she never saw his face again until the pallid hues of death lay upon it, she interceded for him at St Peter's and before the throne of Heaven. While, with cunning art Godfrey planned the ruin of the popes, his wife's sighs and tears stood between him and excommunication, and obtained for him, though not till his last hour, the grace of repentance and forgiveness.

It is significant of the fact that Matilda's union was regarded by her contemporaries as a political means of strengthening the hands of the Pontiffs, and therefore not to be lightly spoken of, that the subject has never been commented on by Donizo. The historian of the family, who follows so minutely the course of his pupil's career, is silent. His faithful pen refuses to chronicle this important event in her life. His patriotism deplores the fact that of the race of the mighty Margraves of Tuscany there remains but the feeble arm of a girl to stand between the Pontiff and his enemies. His poetic soul, torn by conflicting emotions of fidelity to the papal throne and the fearful cost by which its safety was assured, finds no utterance of his grief in verse. This reticence is an eloquent tribute of his appreciation of Matilda's heroic act, the mention of which he passes over with sympathy and regret beyond the power of speech to record.

Beatrice was even more keenly mortified than her

daughter at Godfrey's defection, and her clinging nature sought in vain for a counsellor to whom she could confide her maternal distress. Her husband, who felt no sympathy for her in the matter, was indifferent, and Matilda herself seemed unwilling to approach the subject.

There was one, her friend Hildebrand, who would be able and willing to direct her, and to him she wrote, acquainting him with the events which had taken place, and of which rumours had reached him. In the midst of the anxieties which were entailed upon him in his missions of reform, he had not been unmindful of his friends in Tuscany.

The answer to the appeal of the princess for advice assumed a practical form. Soon after the despatch of her letter she received a visit from the successor of Alexander in the See of Lucca, which his elevation to the papal chair had rendered vacant.

This was Anselm, a native of Beatrice's city of Mantua, where he received his education in "grammar and logic," and of which he afterwards became the patron saint.[1]

On this occasion he had not come as a passing guest, but to remain with Beatrice and Matilda as their spiritual director. Cardinal Hildebrand had sent him to the princesses "to be a guide to them in all things." "As Jesus when expiring upon the Cross confided His Mother to His well-beloved disciple," writes an authority, "thus did Gregory (Hildebrand), Prince of the Roman Church, when he confided to Anselm the Countess." The Bishop is described as being "eminently experienced in the paths of an interior life, and while he studied or conversed with others his heart was virtually united to God, and every object seemed as it were to raise his affections afresh to his Creator." His practical piety and knowledge of public events fitted him for his position, and until his death, a quarter of a century later, he retained the office delegated to him by Cardinal Hildebrand.

[1] Anselm Badagius, Bishop of Lucca, who on his consecration took the title of Alexander II., was a native of Milan, and though a holy man was never canonised.

# Henry IV

The events which were in the meantime unfolding themselves in Germany had, in their consequences, such influence on and such intimate connection with the life of Matilda, that it is necessary at this point to follow them somewhat in detail.

Little did Beatrice dream as she offered up a daily prayer for her nephew the young King, that the consciousness of his evil conduct would hasten her own end. Still less did she foresee the calamities with which in after years he wrecked the peace and happiness of her own child.

There was much in common between Henry and Matilda. Each was born of royal lineage, each was of a pleasing exterior, and each imbibed from their sires courage and mental capacity to fill with honour the high positions to which they were heirs. In age there was only a difference of four years between the cousins, but from their early childhood there was a marked disparity in temper and disposition, and this contrast became more striking as they advanced into youth.

Of the two widows upon whom fell the responsibility of rearing these royal children, Beatrice accorded her daughter a judicious and what would even in the present age be considered severe training. Agnes, on the other hand, permitted the noble intellect of her son to remain uncultivated, and by a foolish indulgence allowed no restraint upon his caprices and no correction of his faults.

One of the most remarkable men of Germany at that period, and one who with stern hand attempted to guide the king in the path of duty was Hanno, Archbishop of Cologne, and to whom that city owed many important improvements. Of high descent and heir to vast estates, the prelate had been early bred to arms, and his friends prophesied for him a brilliant career, for which his birth and military skill eminently fitted him. Contrary to their expectations, the young knight relinquished his profession, and following the example set by many earnest-thinking nobles of his time, he retired to a monastery.

The discipline of early years rendered the monotony of the daily round of monastic life less irksome to Hanno than would have been the case had not his high mettle been tempered by soldierly obedience. The habits of self-restraint acquired in the camp rendered him an admirable and docile pupil, and his intense application to study quickly developed his powerful intellect. The air of command which is inherent in strong natures, followed the knight into the cloister, and he is described by a contemporary as being a man of proud presence and stern temper, and "more fitted to wear the sceptre and sword than the crosier."

The late Emperor found in Hanno a spirit akin to his own, and between the two there existed a warm and lasting friendship. In order to keep him near his person, Henry created him Provost of the Cathedral of Goslar in Lower Saxony where he had fixed his royal residence and where the prince was born who was, in after years, to thwart all the prelate's plans for the stability of the throne.

During the year 1056, the last of Henry's life, Hanno succeeded to the See of Cologne, and on the death of the Emperor became Prime Minister and assisted Agnes in the government during the first part of the king's minority.

Stern and even forbidding in his manners to his equals, Hanno was really of a warm-hearted nature, and his generosity towards public improvements in his diocese was royally munificent. His charity springing from a fountain of love was copious and exhaustless and widened out in boundless limits in all directions. With his own hands he daily distributed alms and food to crowds who gathered round the gates of his palace. Touched by their miseries, "he sought them out in their cottages and carried to them, sometimes on his own shoulders, blankets and other necessaries." [1] He dispensed his gifts with such a gracious and tender demeanour towards the recipients, that the grateful poor idolised the princely giver, not so much for his aid as for the kindly spirit in which it was rendered.

[1] Alban Butler.

Such was the man whom the Emperor had desired to be the guardian of his son. Unfortunately, the haughty spirit of the widowed Agnes would brook no rival at the helm of State. She refused Hanno's guidance and preferred to pursue alone her weak and aimless policy, which threatened the disruption of the Empire. In her anxiety to gain friends for the crown, she granted duchies to men known to be hostile to the imperial court. By these concessions she not only strengthened the hands of her enemies, but also roused the jealousy of those nobles whose loyalty had received no reward. Her feeble hold upon the sceptre enabled those princes who had been deprived of their power by the late monarch to win back their possessions and with them their popularity and influence.

Nor was the Empress more successful in the treatment of her child, whose moral nature was being wrecked by her vacillation.

When Henry was in his tenth year, the Archbishop withdrew him entirely from the charge of his mother, who was totally unfit for the task of controlling the high-tempered and wilful King. Hanno then assumed the position of Regent, and constituted himself, according to the wishes of the deceased Emperor, the guardian and tutor of the youthful monarch.

It may well be imagined that a child so spoilt by his mother's indulgence would not be happy under the rule of such a strict disciplinarian. He daily chafed at the long hours of study and the incessant restraint he was forced to place upon the haughty temper to which hitherto he had been allowed to give full vent. It was new to the boy to yield his will and inclinations at the command of another, and despairing of obtaining the mastery by violence of passion, he took refuge in a sullen obedience.

The Archbishop, with diplomatic foresight, was most anxious that Henry should consolidate his tottering throne by gaining the goodwill of the imperial feudatories. To attain this end he obliged him to receive and visit in turn the most

powerful of the Saxon princes. But the bearded rough-looking warriors, with their blunt uncourtly ways and loud speech, found no favour in the eyes of the wilful child. He refused with obstinate persistence to make any response to their friendly and good-humoured overtures or even to acknowledge their presence when they appeared at court.

Probably, as historians suggest, this boyish antipathy would have been eventually overcome had Henry's opportunities of meeting the princess been more frequent. A closer acquaintance would have made a more favourable impression and unfolded to his growing intelligence the sterling worth which lay hidden beneath their unpolished exteriors. Unfortunately, he did not remain long enough with Hanno for his dislike to be softened or removed, and henceforth his life was spent with men who still further prejudiced his mind against the unoffending chiefs.

Had the King been left to the tuition of the saintly Archbishop, and undergone a severe though judicious training, the whole course of his unhappy life would have been changed. "His natural propensities make it difficult to judge whether he would have proved a good man," yet under the charge of so keen a politician as Hanno, he would at least have proved a successful monarch, capable of wielding with authority the sceptre of his sires. But, alas! ere he had learned the value of his tutor, and before he had overcome the faults engendered by over-indulgence, the poor child was again thrown into the vortex of self-gratification and idleness.

In the October of 1061, when Henry had been little more than a year with Hanno, the Archbishop went to Rome. He intended by his presence at the coronation of Alexander to testify his loyalty to that Pontiff, and, in spite of the wishes of the Empress to the contrary, he would not forego his resolution.

During his absence the "talented and witty, but gay and immoral" Adalbert, Bishop of Bremen, succeeded in drawing the King into his power. The monarch being young and impressionable, hailed with delight the freedom, the change

afforded and was not at all willing to return to the strict surveillance of his former guardian. In Adalbert's palace he was at full liberty to devote his hours to ease and pleasure, and to indulge without restraint in the licentious customs of the day. His passions, encouraged by the example of the worldly prelate, became his master and made a moral shipwreck of all the glorious and noble qualities he had inherited from his sires.

If the Empress had entertained hopes that her son's removal from Hanno's charge would restore her own authority as Regent, she was soon undeceived. Adalbert was far too politic to allow her to resume the reins of government, which he preferred to keep in his own hands. The young King who, according to historians, treated all serious matters as a jest, was only too glad to resign his responsibilities to whomsoever would relieve him of the trouble. The wily Archbishop therefore soon possessed himself of the supreme authority which was supplemented by absolute control of the exchequer.

The position of the Empress was indeed a most unhappy one. Bereft of her husband, and separated from her child, there needed but the usurpation of her power in the empire to crush her proud spirit to the earth. Bitterly had she deplored her hostile attitude towards the Church upon whose gentle bosom she now desired to breathe out her repentance and her grief.

Quitting Germany where she was no longer acknowledged as Regent, she repaired to Rome, that bourne of the humbled and contrite. It was but sixteen years since she had last visited the Capitol. Then she had entered the city as a bride, and, escorted by a large and brilliant retinue, had been led by her husband to the throne and crowned as Empress amid the acclamations of the crowd. Those days had passed, and now she was returning to the scene of her triumph, overwhelmed by misfortunes which were for the greater part the consequences of her own weakness and folly. Laying aside for-

ever her jewels and rich robes, she clothed herself in the coarse black garb by which penitents testified to their contrition for past sins. Casting herself at the feet of the Pontiff whom in her days of pride she had opposed, she begged the Apostolic forgiveness that Alexander was only too ready to accord. Although still in the prime of life, Agnes, weary of the world, sought comfort and peace in the shelter of the cloister where, although she took no vows, she remained in strict seclusion until her death some sixteen years later. The calm uneventful routine of her conventual life continued unbroken, except by the rare advent of visitors from Germany, whose reports of her son's misdoings filled her cup of sorrow to the brim.

The opposition of the Empress to the free election of Alexander, far from preventing the reform of which it was the pioneer, served to strengthen the decisions arrived at by preceding Popes, "that the hands of the Pontiffs should no longer be manacled with the fetters of worldly advancement."

# Laws against Simony

## CHAPTER V

God's blessing on the architects who build
The bridges o'er swift rivers and abysses
Before impassable to human feet;
No less than the builders of cathedrals,
Whose massive walls are bridges thrown across
The dark and terrible abyss of Death.
Well has the name of Pontifex been given
Unto the church's head, as the chief builder
And architect of the invisible bridge
That leads from earth to heaven."

*The Golden Legend.*—LONGFELLOW.

ALMOST the first act of Alexander had been to convene a Council at which one hundred Bishops from all parts of Europe were present. At this meeting were confirmed the decrees which had been repeatedly issued against "inconti-nent clerics and particularly simony, a vice which infected all the elections of the time."

The laws thus levelled against simony were especially resented by Adalbert. The prelate had no less than twelve benefices under his charge for which he openly trafficked, and which proved a fruitful source of revenue for the King and for himself.

Not only was Henry encouraged in his pernicious habits, but funds were supplied from the coffers of the Church to meet the expenses of his licentious pleasures. By this baneful example and influence, the Bishop fostered in the mind of his young charge a disregard of the ecclesiastical rights of which, when crowned Emperor, he would swear to become the avowed champion. The weeds of antagonism and defiance of the Holy See thus early developed in a fruitful soil, were never afterwards eradicated.

Nor was this intolerance confined to spiritual matters, but extended to state affairs, and led to serious disturbances in the Empire. Encouraged by Adalbert's short-sighted policy, the King ridiculed the Saxon chiefs to their faces, and by his insults so roused their ire, that they broke out into open rebellion. The rising was quickly suppressed by the imperial troops, but the courage of the princes was not damped by this reverse. The powerful Dukes of Suabia and Bavaria, though quieted for a time, were not conquered, and only awaited an opportunity of revenging themselves for the King's insolence and tyranny.

In the following year (1065) Adalbert, unwilling to take the further responsibility of the Regency, declared the King, though only in his sixteenth year, to have attained his majority. The Bishop did not, by this act, intend to resign the reins of power, which by flattering the vices and humouring the fancies of the youthful monarch, he still trusted to retain.

King but in name, Henry took up his royal residence at his birthplace, Goslar, a well-fortified city which lay at the foot of the Rammelsberg, in the heart of Saxony. The city dated back to the year 920, when it was founded by the first who bore the name upon which Henry brought such discredit.

The restless nobles, roused to fury by the continued misgovernment of the King, which they rightly ascribed to Adalbert, at length took action and made a midnight attack upon the palace. The terrified courtiers fled in dismay, and the Bishop barely escaped falling into the hands of the irate Saxons, who had surrounded the building in the hopes of taking him prisoner.

It had been the wish of the late Emperor that his infant son should be betrothed to his cousin Matilda. Being unable to effect his purpose, he chose instead Bertha, daughter of the Margrave of Susa. The lady is described as being exceedingly plain and homely in appearance and manners, but of a most loving and amiable disposition. Hanno had, by

Adalbert's disgrace, regained somewhat of his authority over the King, and trusting that her gentleness and piety would have a salutary effect upon him, compelled him to fulfil the contract entered into by his father.

Henry had, however, as the moralist sternly remarks, tasted too freely of the sweets of liberty to be happy with so virtuous and elderly a spouse.

In 1068 he became animated with such a dislike of the Queen, that he petitioned Alexander to grant him a divorce. The Pontiff thereupon sent Peter Damian to Germany as Legate, in order to convince the King of the sin and folly of his conduct, and to assure him of the impossibility of acceding to his request.

The aged Bishop, to whom no labours in the service of the Church were too arduous, accepted the trust, and though eighty years of age, cheerfully bore the discomforts of his unpleasant journey.

A meeting of King and nobles was summoned at Frankfort, at which the Legate laid before them "the orders and instructions of His Holiness, and in his name conjured the King to pay a due regard to the law of God and his own reputation, and to seriously reflect upon the public scandal of so pernicious an example." [1]

Peter Damian's venerable form, habited as usual in coarse sackcloth, which hung loosely upon his emaciated body, and his impassioned speech, had such an effect upon the assembled nobility that they rose simultaneously and entreated the King to regard the Bishop's advice.

Henry, seeing that there was no chance of obtaining release from his marriage bonds, and that popular feeling was against him, was forced to yield, but with a very bad grace, and, as the historian quaintly remarks, "remaining the same man in his heart continued to hate the Queen more than ever."

Bertha, who loved her handsome boy-husband, bore his

[1] Alban Butler.

contumely with patience, and clung to him with a constancy that never wavered during all the years that she suffered from his insults and neglect. She was a pious and virtuous Queen, and uncontaminated by the loose morality of the Court, she preserved a spotless reputation, untarnished by the temptations placed in her way by the King. On one occasion, at his suggestion she arranged for an evening visit from a gentleman of the Court. Henry, only too glad of a chance of incriminating the Queen, kept the appointment, and on his entrance the doors were, by his orders, immediately locked from without. To his surprise, the lights which were burning low were suddenly extinguished, and Bertha and her handmaidens, disregarding his protestations, threw themselves upon him. Pretending not to recognise his voice, they so soundly belaboured the unfortunate monarch that he was too bruised to appear in public for several days.

Henry soon wearied of his enforced retirement and hourly bemoaned the absence of Adalbert, who, by fostering his pleasures, had made himself indispensable to the King's happiness. The restraint at length became intolerable, and in spite of the prayers and tears of Bertha and the warnings of Hanno, he recalled the exiled Bishop and openly restored him to Court. The decease of Adalbert within the year relieved Bertha and the empire from an enemy, the results of whose evil training had sapped the moral life of the pupil whose future he had ruined.

On the death of his so-called friend, Henry openly showed his contempt and dislike of his Saxon subjects, whom he treated "as a conquered race." At length a deputation of the chiefs attended upon him for the purpose of having an interview on the subject of their grievances. The King, with frowning brow, bade the princes await his leisure in an anteroom, from whence through the open door they could hear his coarse jests at their expense. All day they waited, fretting and fuming in their impatience and anger at the indignity with which they were treated. "But, who shall

describe the feelings of the deputation," says the historian, "when as the evening began to close in they were dismissed unheard and unrefreshed after their long hours of waiting."

The sequel is not hard to guess. Arrived at their homes, the enraged chieftains summoned their followers and proceeding with all haste to Goslar, took the King by surprise. His carelessly mounted guards were quickly overpowered, the servile courtiers fled during the panic which ensued, and Henry was left entirely at the mercy of his justly irate suzerains. The triumphant nobles were not slow in availing themselves of this opportunity of compelling the King to grant them a hearing. A Council was hastily summoned, and Henry was forced to sign a treaty by which he ceded all their demands, including a promise "to reform if not his private at least his public life." By this prompt action the chiefs secured an end of the disorderly scenes by which the King had disgraced his reign, and, for a time at least, the tranquillity of the government was assured.

The disturbances in Germany which had thus culminated in the revolt and victory of the Saxon nobles had by its disruption of political authority tended greatly to the advantage of Italy.

The election of Alexander by the free votes of the Cardinals was a marked event in the annals of that country. The signal success which had attended the exertions of Matilda on the Pontiff's behalf had infused the people with courage and cemented the more strongly their attachment to his cause. Aroused from their real or feigned indifference, they rightly concluded that the interests of Italy and those of the Holy See were identical. "Their patriotic sentiment received," remarks the historian, "a wholesome impetus," and their proverbial love of freedom became fully awakened.

Cadalous, the anti-pope, deprived by the unsettled condition of the empire, of government support, was unable to retrieve the fortunes of war which had declared in favour of Alexander. He was therefore compelled, though unwillingly,

to forego his claim and abandon all hope of ever occupying the papal chair. The chain of submission to Germany being thus severed, the freedom of the Church and of Italy was, at any rate for a time, secured. The inhabitants of that sunny land were left to develop with varying industry the resources of their rich and fertile soil. From hill and valley rose the glad song of the happy peasants as they cheerfully pursued the daily occupations which the war had interrupted.

There was one exception, however, to the general rule of peace, and that was in the Norman settlements. Sicily had long been the prey of the Saracens, who came in large hordes and overran the country. Roger, brother of Robert Guiscard, who had resolved upon their complete evacuation of his territory, engaged himself in a severe war for this purpose. The Pontiff marked his approval of the work of repelling the infidels by sending a special envoy to the Count, bearing his blessing and assurances of his prayers for the success of the Christian army. The messengers also brought as a present to Roger a consecrated banner, wrought in a wonderful design of silver, and worked, it is supposed, by the clever fingers of Matilda and her handmaidens.

Proudly waved the standard of the Church in the van of the little army of three hundred resolute warriors whom the brave chief led forward to attack and to defeat seventeen thousand of their foes. "In a document still preserved," we learn that the Pontiff "granted a plenary indulgence" to all who wrested any portion of the island from the invaders.[1]

Another standard, blessed by Alexander and which was probably also the handiwork of Matilda, was sent to William of Normandy. It was with the sanction of Alexander that the Duke entered upon the invasion of England, which was

[1] This was nearly five centuries before the Reformation, when Martin Luther, "taking no account of dates or facts of history, has, in attempting to prove that indulgences were of modern invention, suppressed this and other instances which prove the contrary." *Lives of the Roman Pontiffs*, by the Chevalier D'Artaud de Montor.

regarded at the time as a religious undertaking. The banner waved at the mast-head of the ship which conveyed him across the Channel and floated over his tent in the centre of the camp, while his men "made their shrift and caused themselves to be houselled."

The tender heart of the Pope was much touched by the sad condition of the Jews, who were at that period very cruelly treated, "even their murder being considered as a meritorious act." During his pontificate he made every effort to alleviate their sufferings and to mitigate the injustice under which they were smarting. In his numerous encyclicals to prelates of all countries, he constantly urged a reform in the treatment of these law-abiding but unfortunate children of Israel. Writing to the French Bishops on this subject, he praised them for not having encouraged unmerited cruelties against "a people ever dear to God and now scattered over the world by His justice."

So much was Alexander occupied with the duties of his pontificate that though his soul longed to be in Tuscany among his faithful flock, he was unable to tear himself away from Rome. He, however, maintained a correspondence with his late diocese of Lucca, and sent for some of the Canons attached to the Cathedral to take up their abode at St John Lateran.[1]

No easy postal system facilitated the transport of written communications in those days, and letters were generally sent by mounted couriers, whose safe arrival was often a matter of doubt. Not only was travelling rendered difficult at certain times of the year, but parts of the country were infested with gangs of mercenaries who lay in wait to relieve wayfarers of their property. In spite of the difficulties of transit, many messages passed between the Pontiff and the princesses, containing assurances of his regard and reminders

[1] Their successors are styled to this day "the Canons Regular of St John Lateran."

that they had not yet fulfilled the promise they had made to visit him.

It was not until the tenth year of his reign that the Countess and her daughter found an opportunity of starting on the long-deferred journey. During all those years Beatrice had been engaged with the affairs of her marquisate, and also in maintaining a constant vigilance, lest the simoniacs of Lombardy should contaminate the election of the prelates to the various Sees contained in her territory. Other enemies, too, there were, who might prove scarcely less formidable to the material prosperity of her people than were the former to their spiritual welfare. These were the Normans, who had settled in large numbers in close proximity to the Tuscan boundary, and of whose cruelties exaggerated rumours had spread universal terror. But they proved to be less troublesome neighbours than Beatrice anticipated, and with a chivalrous punctiliousness avoided any encroachment in her domain.

Matilda, now in her twenty-fifth year, was still ardently attached to her literary pursuits. Donizo describes her as having an insatiable thirst for knowledge, and as being particularly clever in making translations of the valuable and scarce manuscripts of her favourite Greek, Latin, French or German authors. By this means she was constantly adding to her already large collection of books, and she became in course of time the owner of one of the finest libraries of the period, hardly inferior to those of the Benedictine monasteries, which were renowned.

In this age, when books and magazines are daily multiplying to keep pace with the requirements of omnivorous readers, it is difficult to realise what an amount of labour was comprised in Matilda's literary work. Nor can we estimate aright the patience which she brought to the aid of copying rare and valuable manuscripts. These parchments which were borrowed from the various monastic institutions of

Europe, were not unfrequently yellow with age and greasy from constant use. It was only by poring hour after hour and day after day over the scarcely decipherable writing, we are told, that she was able to reproduce the works she desired to possess. To her assiduous cultivation of the ancient writers has been attributed the preservation of the Tuscan dialects, which have retained their purity and have become inseparably woven into the classic literature of Italy.[1]

The palaces of Beatrice and Matilda were veritable treasure-houses of literature and science. Within them were gathered all that was noble of intellect and virtue and whatever in that age of budding art was refined and beautiful. Their apartments were adorned with designs in needlework, the production of the industry of the princesses and that of their handmaidens. Here were embroidered knightly banners which led the Christian armies to conquest. Here also were wrought in gold and silver thread rich vestments for the clergy and lovely altar cloths for the churches, and here, too, were fashioned and made warm garments for the poor.

The science of chemistry was practised by the Countess and her daughter, who, in common with the ladies of their time, were skilled in the art of healing. With their own hands they prepared wonderful salves, principally composed of the pure oil of the olive, with which they dressed the sores and wounds of the poor. From the herbs which were collected and carefully dried by Matilda and her attendants, were extracted the medicinal properties afterwards used for the sick. In those far-off times no brougham rolled lightly over the roads conveying physicians to their patients; many of the modern alleviations of pain were then unknown, and

[1] It was not until a hundred and fifty years after Matilda's death that Dante, the sublime poet, who drew his first breath in Florence, imparted to his native tongue "that grandeur and majesty" by which he has for ever enriched it. "The literary language is spoken with the greatest purity by the educated classes in Tuscany, and a proverb declares the best Italian to be the language of Tuscany with the pronunciation of Rome ('La lingua Tuscana in bocca Romana')."

suffering was borne with a resignation and fortitude that was martyr-like in its intensity. There were no public hospitals for the reception of the sick, who were generally tended by their own friends or neighbours, or placed under the care of religious orders. Beatrice and Matilda made the sick poor their especial charge. No diseases were too repulsive for their loving administrations, no wounds too ghastly for the application of their surgical skill, no hovel too mean for their gracious presence. Theirs was the true charity which not only relieved the wants of the poor, but included that personal service and loving-kindness which is so valuable in the sight of God.

What happy and busy days those were. Days in which every hour fulfilled its mission, and which fled all too quickly, leaving their tender memories to be the solace of after years.

The Church has never entered the names of Beatrice and Matilda upon her list of saints, but so they appeared when they entered the humble dwellings, and with sweet solicitude dispensed their benefits to those in need.

So much had these and similar duties absorbed the attention of the princesses that the years flew by, leaving them insensible of the passing of time and forgetful of their promised visit to Rome. Probably even then the journey would not have been undertaken but for the often exaggerated reports which reached them of the behaviour of Henry. Beatrice remembered that he was of her own kin, and she feared lest his rashness would not only tarnish his name with dishonour, but also draw upon him the wrath of the Church. Again and again had she sent messages of appeal to Alexander, begging him by most earnest entreaties to stay for a while the denunciation of his conduct, in the hope that years would bring somewhat of discretion to the wilful monarch.

The princesses were received with every demonstration of delight by the grateful Romans, who had not forgotten the

services rendered by these ladies in defence of their city and of the Holy See.

Time which had passed its hands lightly over the graceful form of Beatrice, had made marked changes in the person of her daughter. She had left her youth so far behind her, that it was difficult to recognise in the beautiful woman before them, the girl-heroine whose praises they were never tired of singing.

Alexander welcomed his friends with evident pleasure, and heartfelt was the benediction he bestowed upon them as in lowly salutation they knelt at his feet.

Beatrice had a petition to make to the Pontiff, and before she rose from her humble posture, she pleaded with many tears, the cause of her nephew. She represented his youth and ill-advised training in extenuation of his disobedience, and was comforted by the smile with which the holy father listened to her suit, and by the words of hopeful assurance with which he answered her appeal.

Matilda, who had risen to her feet, stood at a little distance from the throne during her mother's intercession for Henry. She glanced at the familiar features of the Pontiff, so sacred a memory of her childhood, and could scarcely restrain a cry of dismay as she noted the alteration which the years had made in him. So feeble and frail-looking had he become, that it appeared as if he could scarcely support the weight of his pontifical vestments.

But though his strength had diminished his spirit was unchanged, and though his wearied brain appealed in vain for rest, the even administration of ecclesiastical law never wavered during his reign.

The Countess and her daughter were much edified by the counsels of the Pontiff, and even in that short space of time they could not fail to be impressed by the magnitude of the cares which surrounded the tiara.

A very pleasant incident concluded their visit. This was

the coming to Rome of no less a personage than their world-renowned countryman, the celebrated Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury.

Alexander was overjoyed at seeing his former tutor after the lapse of so many years, and rising from his throne he advanced to meet the primate with every mark of deferential respect. In answer to the looks of surprise with which so unusual an act of condescension was regarded, even by the princesses, the Pontiff remarked, "It was not because he is primate of England that I rise to honour him, but because I was his pupil at Bec, and I then sat at his feet and listened to his instruction."[1]

Alas! the reign of Alexander, which had lasted for nearly twelve years, was now drawing to its end. Already the eyes of the Catholic world were turning with eager anticipation to his adviser and friend, Hildebrand, as the future Pontiff. "He who had been the mainspring and director of five successive Popes, had no need to rely upon the patronage of King or Emperor to secure his election to the papal chair."[2] "His irreproachable life and morals," continues a Protestant historian, "rendered him universally venerated."

Towards the close of his reign, news was brought to Alexander of the illness of Cadalous, and of his desire for reconciliation with the Church.

With characteristic generosity, the sick Pontiff, instead of sending a message of forgiveness to the penitent, caused himself to be carried to the bedside of the anti-pope. It was nothing to Alexander that before him lay the man who had sought to usurp his throne. He saw only a broken-spirited son, in need of tender words of pity and of blessing, and with these he soothed the grieved and contrite soul of the dying prelate.

Cadalous was touched to the heart by the kindness and evident feebleness of the man he had injured. In an agony

[1] *Literary History of the Middle Ages.* J. Berrington, 1846.
[2] Leo IX., Victor II., Stephen IX., Nicholas II., Alexander II.

of remorse he begged forgiveness for his presumption in seeking the papal throne, saying, "You are the Universal Shepherd of the Church of God."

From the bedside of Cadalous the Pontiff was conveyed by easy stages to Tuscany. He wished to be once again in his former diocese, and to rest his aching eyes by gazing upon the beauties with which Lucca had been by nature so freely enriched. His flock, with that affectionate ardour for which the Italians are noted, came out in crowds to meet him, and in respectful silence knelt by the roadside as his emaciated form was borne through their midst.

It was with a pleasure akin to sadness that Beatrice and Matilda welcomed their Bishop and Sovereign Pontiff to the marquisate in which he had laboured for so many years. They brought their medical skill to bear upon him, and sought by every remedy that science or affection could suggest, to alleviate the sufferings which he endured without murmur or complaint, and from which for a time he seemed to rally.

His last public function was the dedication to St Martin of the Romanesque cathedral which he had built, and which still bears witness to his piety and liberality. But Alexander had drawn too much upon his revived energies, and scarcely was the ceremony ended than, overcome with fatigue and weakness, he was conveyed to the bed from which he never rose.

He lingered for some time ere he was released from the pains which he bore with the courage of a martyr. His sick chamber was visited each day by persons of all ranks. He did not refuse to give audience to the poorest of the peasants who begged for the blessing of their "dear Bishop" who had come to breathe out his last sigh amongst them. When his failing strength permitted, he held sweet converse with the princesses, and the words of counsel, of warning, and of encouragement which fell from his lips, remained indelibly

fixed in Matilda's memory, and were a comfort to her in many an hour of trial.

Alexander's last hours, unlike those of his predecessors, were untroubled by any anxiety as to the future of the papacy. Hildebrand, in whose ability and zeal he had full faith, would undoubtedly be chosen to succeed. By his instrumentality the dying Pontiff was assured the Church would occupy that unique position in the world to which her Divine institution entitled her. Alexander, whose own election was the beginning of this era of religious freedom, passed away during his sleep on 21st April 1073.

With weeping eyes Beatrice and Matilda took a last farewell of their friend and counsellor, as he lay in the calm sleep of death, with a smile still hovering round his scarcely-closed lips.

As soon as tidings of the Pope's death reached Rome, Hildebrand, with the consent of his ecclesiastical brethren, gave orders for a fast of three days to be observed during the time "that the last honours should be paid to the body wherein once dwelt Anselm of Lucca."

Alexander's body was conveyed to Rome for burial, and the princesses accompanied his remains to St John Lateran, where he was to be interred, and in which church he had filled a Canon's stall.

A solemn procession of great length was formed, comprising Cardinals, prelates, priests, heads of monastic houses, nobles, and princes, and representatives from the courts of Europe, that of Germany excepted.

Headed by Hildebrand, before whom was borne the emblem of our salvation, they went forth to receive the remains of their late Sovereign Pontiff.

It was natural that the faithful should in their sorrow look to Hildebrand to assume control during the interregnum. It was also natural that he who had been the right hand of the Church should become the principal authority at such a time. He held consultation with his fellow-Cardinals to

decide what action to take, and they were only too willing to resign the direction of events to so capable a leader.

It was Hildebrand upon whom all attention was riveted, and whose movements were noted with keen interest, as he asperged or sprinkled with holy water the body of his friend as it lay in the choir.

As he mounted the pulpit stairs, he was followed by the gaze of the multitude, who, as if by magic, seemed suddenly to forget the purpose for which they were assembled. They were oblivious of all, save that before them stood the most illustrious orator of the day, and in their desire not to lose a word of his discourse, they crowded closely round the "chair of truth."

But their expectation of being held entranced listeners to the Cardinal's usual flow of eloquence was doomed to disappointment. His loving heart was full of the loss which the Church and himself had just sustained. Tears of sorrow coursed down his thin cheeks, and his utterance was broken by sobs, as, in a few moving words, he testified to the merits of the departed Pontiff.

Suddenly the stillness of the crowd was broken by a voice saying—"Hildebrand for Pope! Hildebrand for Pope! St Peter has chosen him!" In vain the preacher raised his hand to enforce silence. For once his authority was unheeded, and the cry, taken up by the congregation, spread rapidly throughout the whole city. Except for the name, they were the same words that had rent the air just a quarter of a century before, when Leo IX. had entered Rome as a pilgrim with no other companion than Hildebrand.

The funeral ceremonies over, the Cardinals retired to make their selection of a successor to the throne. Their decision in favour of Hildebrand was unanimous, the only dissentient vote being that of the Pope elect.

He was at this time, 1073, sixty years of age, and his somewhat austere countenance indicated that he would be

unsparing in his measures to rid the Church of the burdens that had humiliated her so long. "There was great need," remarks Churton, "that there should be someone who, like him, should proclaim himself the assertor of justice, the reformer of morals, and restorer of religion."

Hildebrand who, like his predecessor, had been elected independent of imperial support, hastened to notify the German Court of what had occurred. Henry, who appears to have yielded to the popular enthusiasm, made no sign that he disapproved of the choice, and even sent the Bishop of Vercelli to be his representative at the coronation. This was the more remarkable, because Hildebrand had frequently warned the monarch that were he Pope, his first care would be to punish him for his corrupt practices and immoral life.

Before being crowned Hildebrand, who was only a deacon, though a Cardinal, had first to be ordained priest, and afterwards to be consecrated Bishop in the Basilica of the Lateran. This is probably the only instance on record, in which the dual ceremony was thus necessary to render the consecration of a Pontiff a valid act.[1]

As he entered St Peter's, Hildebrand was met by a cleric who, according to the custom observed at the coronation of Sovereign Pontiffs, carried in his hand a reed surmounted by flax. This being set on fire, flashed up for a moment with a brightness that rivalled the June sun, and then died suddenly away into utter blackness during the solemn chanting of the monks. "No need had Hildebrand," truly remarks the learned historian,[2] "to be reminded of the passing away of temporal glory." No ambitious spirit was he to need the lesson thus conveyed in this symbol of unenduring fame. The impressively intoned words—"Pater sancte sic transit gloria mundi" ("Holy Father, thus passeth away the world's glory"), brought him comfort instead of warning, as verifying the

[1] "He is the first Pope who, being only a deacon, was then ordained priest." *Lives of the Popes.* Reference to Fleury iv., page 405.

[2] Right Hon. Sir James Stephen.

words of the Psalmist—"A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench."

Hildebrand, to use his Christian name for the last time, was crowned the next day, 29th June, taking the title of Gregory VII. This was in memory of John Gratian, Gregory VI., who had been his director, and whom he much revered.

In the spring of the following year Gregory VII., in a letter to William the Conqueror, explains his position and the dangers surrounding the pontifical throne, which rendered the tiara a crown of thorns.

To William, King of the English, 1074.

From your joy at the certain report of our promotion, we undoubtedly believe that you adhere in your heart to your Mother, the Holy Roman Church, and that you love her as you ought to do with all your strength. You exhibit the affection of a good son, the affection of a son who in his heart loves his mother. We admonish you to prefer the honour of God, and all the things which are of God, to your own things and to all worldly things, since undoubtedly it is the neglect of this alone which is wont to ruin potentates of your dignity and thrust them into hell.

But our condition, which you suppliantly desire to know, is as follows: Unwillingly we embark in the ship which is uncertainly tossed about in the stormy sea, by the violence of the waves, and by the impulse of the whirlpools and by the waves rising up to the skies amid hidden rocks. . . .

For the Holy Roman Church, over which we, unworthy and unwilling to do so, preside, is continually and daily shaken by different temporal powers, and by very many persecutions of hypocrites, and by the snares and deceitful objections of heretics, and is, both secretly and openly, torn asunder by worldly potentates.

To encounter all these things and as far as possible to provide against them and many other evils, chiefly appertains to our office and care. We are day and night fretted by the

care of these things. We are continually torn by these and like matters, although in the esteem of the sons of the world these things may seem to smile upon us.

Given at Rome the second day of the Nones of April.[1]

In a letter to Hugo, Abbot of Cluny, Gregory opens his heart to his friend, and "one cannot fail to be touched," remarks the historian, "with the vein of sadness and humility which runs throughout the epistle." "Would that I could make known to you," he says, "the full extent of the tribulations which assail me, and of the labours incessantly renewed which overwhelm me and crush me beneath their daily increasing weight. Many a time have I asked our Divine Saviour to remove me from this world or to permit me to become useful to our common Mother. An unspeakable pain and melancholy seize me as I behold the Eastern Church which the spirit of darkness has separated from the Catholic Faith. Looking to the West, to the South and to the North, I can only discern a few Bishops who have entered the Episcopacy by canonical ways, and who govern their flock in a spirit of charity and not with the despotic pride of the powers of the earth. Among the secular princes I know none who prefers the glory of God to his own glory and justice to self-interest. As for those among whom I live, the Romans, Lombards and Normans, I often tell them that they are worse than Jews and Pagans. When at length I revert to myself, I find myself so overwhelmed beneath the weight of my own actions, that I see no hope of salvation, save only in the mercy of Christ, for if I had not the hope of a better life and the prospect of being useful to the Church, God knoweth that I would no longer abide in Rome, where I feel myself as though in chains. It is thus that divided between a grief daily renewed within me and a hope, alas! only too

[1] Selection of the *Letters of Hildebrand*—Gregory VII. Translated by G. Finch. London, 1853.

distant, I am assailed by a thousand tempests and my life is but one continual agony."[1]

While Gregory through his letters permitted the laity a glimpse of the many difficulties which beset the life of a Pontiff, his friends in Tuscany were not free from trouble. About this time (1074), Beatrice lost her husband whose wooing, though somewhat unceremonious in its nature, had led to nearly twenty years of not unhappy married life. He had allowed his wife, a most unusual concession in those days, undivided authority over her property, and proved himself in every way so kind and considerate a consort, that Beatrice felt his loss more keenly than she would have deemed it possible. He does not appear to have taken part in any public affairs since his defeat of the imperial troops early in the reign of the late Pope. Probably he felt that the avowal of his political opinions would give pain to his wife, whose grace and nobility of character led him to regard her with feelings of respect that were almost reverential. Had not the Empress restored his duchy to Godfrey the Younger, it is very probable that he would, aided by men and money from Beatrice, have attempted to regain his patrimony, but under the circumstances, he could not wrest it from his own son. In spite of the reiterated requests of Le Bossu, the ban of exile had not been repealed, either by Agnes or by Henry, who now held the reins of government. But although he was not allowed to return to his own country, his sympathies, like those of his son, were with the German interests, which were diametrically opposed to those of Italy.

At the commencement of his malady, Beatrice had gone with him to Verdun, in the hopes that his native air would restore him to health. But it was too late, and after a short illness he quietly passed away, fortified by the last consolations of the Church, "in sentiments of high piety." We learn that from the moment he arrived in Germany he gave

[1] Selection of the *Letters of Hildebrand*—Gregory VII. Translated by G. Finch. London, 1853.

himself up to the care of the poor, by whom he was constantly surrounded and he would only admit to his table those whose poverty would have deprived them of a meal. He was buried in the cathedral, which he had formerly set on fire, an act for which he endeavoured to make amends by performing various acts of charity.

The two princesses, thus left alone to combat with the difficulties of their position, conceived the idea of retiring together into a convent. Only there would they be freed from the distractions and anxieties which were inseparable from their public life. It was even more difficult in mediæval times for women of high degree to follow a rule of self-discipline than it is at the present day. Only in the convent were they sheltered from the temptations by which the world daily weakened their resolutions and sapped their spiritual life.

After much deliberation Beatrice and Matilda wrote to acquaint the Pontiff with their desire and to ask his advice upon the subject. Gregory was, however, unable to send a reply to their letter, or even to be made acquainted with its contents. He was at the time so prostrated by his devotion to his onerous duties, that it was doubtful whether he would recover. His naturally strong constitution, however, enabled him to rally from an attack which would have killed most men. His first thought on arriving at a state of convalescence was to write to the widowed Countess and her daughter. He dissuaded them from the serious step they contemplated, urging as a reason the immense amount of good their example of virtue would effect in so licentious an age. "Instead of banishing God from your palace as many princes do, He is invited thither by the odour of your holiness. We therefore exhort you, dear children, to persevere in the path of perfection." "Know ye too," he continued, "that we have just escaped from bodily sickness, contrary to the expectation of those around us, and that we have recovered our health, which seems to us matter for sorrow rather than joy. For

our own soul aspired with all its strength for that land where He who knows our toils and sorrows gives peace and rest to the weary."

Among the trials which beset the Pontiff at this time was the conduct of the German sovereign. The warning which on his accession Gregory had sent to the King, that he would place a restriction upon his excesses, had long been forgotten by the heedless monarch. Trusting to wean him by a gentle firmness from the vicious courses which were a scandal to the Christian world, the Pope had, from the commencement of his reign, adopted towards him a conciliatory policy. This unexpected tenderness and leniency drew from Henry, who was not yet wholly depraved, a letter, the tone of which was not only friendly but even submissive.

In the joy of his heart at this response to his overtures, Gregory sent to apprise his friends in Tuscany that the King had written to implore his clemency and to assure the Holy Father of his repentance. "Learn," continues the happy Pope, "that the King Henry has just addressed to us a letter, full of humility and obedience, such as we do not remember he nor his predecessors have ever written to Roman Pontiffs." "But," as the historian naïvely remarks, "the language of Henry was as variable as his conduct," and the sick-bed of Gregory had been troubled by rumours, which reached him of the monarch's relapse into the follies of his youth. In a later letter addressed to the princesses, the Pope expressed himself full of grief for the waywardness of the King, though he trusted much to the pious influence of the gentle Queen Bertha to restrain him in the wild career upon which he had entered.

"We will," says Gregory, in conclusion, "send to him some wise persons who will give him wholesome advice, and exhort him to return to his duty. Adieu then, dear children in Jesus Christ, and be assured that we hold you in the depth of our heart."

It was time indeed for interference on the part of those

who desired to save the King from utter ruin. While his arrogance had wounded the pride of his nobles, his sacrilegious and immoral life had alienated those of his subjects who were pious and virtuous. "The dislike with which Saxons were viewed by the monarch ere long became as unbearable to them as his licentious habits, which were, with reason, a scandal and a shame to the whole empire." He gave full rein to his vices, "and," continues the historian, "appeared in public with his mistresses, adorned with gold and jewels, taken from the sacred vessels of the Church."

The condition of the Bishops and clergy who would not lend themselves to simoniacal practices was sad in the extreme. Their letters to Gregory of the exactions made upon their revenues to supply the means for the monarch's extravagance were "frequent and full." To such an extent was simony carried on, that "scarcely," we are informed, "had a single ecclesiastical dignity been conferred by the imperial crown gratuitously." The laity themselves refused the priestly offices of those whom they knew to have obtained their position by uncanonical ways. Children were baptised by their parents in their own homes, and when members of the family were stricken by illness, they refused the ministrations of simoniacal priests, and went to their graves unconsoled by the last rites of the Church.[1]

The repeated acts of violence, and the deliberate infraction of the rights of the Holy See, of which Henry had been guilty, would long since have drawn upon him the wrath of the Church, had it not been for the prayers of his relatives in Italy. Beatrice and Matilda were constantly interceding on his behalf, and the Empress from her conventual retreat again and again pleaded for her wayward son. With his heart yearning over the erring King, Gregory resolved to make a last appeal to his better nature. He wrote, exhorting him to desist from his evil courses, which could only end in ruin, spiritual and temporal; to endeavour to command the

[1] *History of Italian Republics.* J. C. Sismondi. 1852.

obedience of his subjects by his virtues, rather than his vices, and to show to the Church that deference she expects from one who professes her faith. "It is at the prayer of the august Empress, your mother," continues the Pontiff, "but, above all, at the advice of Beatrice and Matilda, that we write to you."

With the view of firing the monarch with religious enthusiasm, and of withdrawing him for a time from the temptations of his Court, Gregory suggested to him the idea of the occupation of Jerusalem by a Christian army. He furnished him with details of the barbarities inflicted upon pilgrims to Palestine, and assured him that troops were ready to march to save the holy places from desecration.

"I tell you," wrote the Pontiff, "that the Christians beyond the sea, persecuted by the heathen, and oppressed by miseries, have sent to me, humbly praying me to do the best I can to succour them, and to prevent amongst them the entire ruin of the Christian religion.

"I am prostrated with sadness, because of that, and am ready to die. I am ready to expose my life for them, rather than they should not be succoured.

"It is for this reason I work to exhort all Christians, and persuade them to give their lives for the brethren, and to show as clear as day of what the children of God are capable in defending the law of Christ.

"Already the Italians and those beyond the mountains, inspired by Heaven as I believe, have received my exhortations in good earnest. Already more than fifty thousand faithful are preparing for that enterprise and under my command to march forward against the enemies of God and to penetrate as far as the sepulchre of our Lord.

"What excites me most powerfully is that the Church of Constantinople separated from us, the Armenians also, and the greater part of the Eastern Church, while waiting for the faith of the Apostle Peter to decide between the diverse creeds, are on our side.

"Our fathers often visited these countries for the triumph of the Catholic faith. We should, however unworthily, follow in their footsteps, and it is our duty to act as they acted and to march to the defence of the same religion.

"But so great an enterprise is worthy of serious counsels and powerful aid, and it is to you, after God, that I will confide the defence of the Roman Church in order that you may guard it as a holy mother and preserve its honour.

"Let me know as soon as possible what you think of this prospect, and may the inspiration of heaven aid you in your decision."[1]

But Henry was far too self-indulgent to grasp the importance of a movement which, had he been in command, would have opened up the East to Germany for exploration and commerce and cemented his own authority by closer relations with the heads of European Courts. He had both the courage and ability for the task, and it was one of the many mistakes of his life that, giving himself up to personal gratification, he let this opportunity of having his name enrolled among the heroes of chivalry slip by unheeded.

Years later, when Gregory had passed away and Henry's sun was setting in ignominy and disgrace, the glory of the victory fell to one of his own knights.

Though the Pontiff was, as Cardinal Newman has remarked, "engaged in one of the severest conflicts which Pope has ever sustained, not only against the secular power, but against bad Bishops and priests, yet at a time when his very life was not his own, and present responsibilities so urged him that one would fancy he had no time for other thought, Gregory was able to turn his mind to the consideration of a contingent danger in the almost fabulous East." "There was one," continues the Cardinal, "the divinely-appointed Shepherd of the poor of Christ, the anxious Steward of His Church, who, from his high and ancient watch-tower in the fulness of apostolic charity, surveyed narrowly what was going on thousands of

[1] Renée Amédée.

miles from him, and with prophetic eye looked into the future age; and scarcely had that enemy who was in the event so heavily to smite the Christian world, shown himself, when he gave warning of the danger, and prepared himself, with measures for averting it."[1]

Gregory, whose vigour seemed to be inexhaustible, was most assiduous in the performance of the many and various duties pertaining to his high office. In the space of two years he had convoked no less than seven Councils, in each of which he attacked in no sparing measure the abuses of the day.

There was one reform which, on his accession to the papal throne, Gregory had sternly intended to carry into effect. That was the suppression of the heresy of the Nicholaites, a name given to those who advocated marriage among the clergy.

The reasons for clerical celibacy are both obvious and logical for, as St Paul remarks, "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord how he may please the Lord. But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife."[2] "Now," remarks a Catholic Bishop, "the Church will have no divided hearts among her Bishops and priests, and will therefore accept the ministrations of those only who take a vow of celibacy." The work of the priesthood is essentially that of a missionary, and the unmarried cleric can, as a Protestant prelate justly observes, "be expeditiously and readily removed from place to place. He has no interests but those of the Church and the Church's Head; has no temptation in heaping up riches, and none to form worldly schemes and seek worldly interests for the advancement of his family."

In a Council held at Rome in the same year (1074), it was determined that "(1) no clerk should take a wife; (2) that Holy Orders should be conferred on such only as would profess perpetual celibacy; and (3) that no married man should offer up Mass."

[1] *Historical Sketches.* J. H. Newman, vol. I.

[2] 1 Cor. vii. 32. Same reference in Catholic and Protestant versions.

This might at first sight appear to be rather a harsh procedure, and one that would bear heavily upon those priests and their wives who had entered into matrimonial alliances. But the laws passed by preceding Pontiffs had already forbidden what was now condemned, and the hardships brought upon those who had broken the rule were those of their own seeking.

## CHAPTER VI

> "The passionate will, the pride, the wrath,
> That bore me headlong on my path,
> Stumbled and staggered into fear
> And failed me in my mad career."—*The Golden Legend.*

In Lent of the following year (1075), Gregory convoked a Council, at which the vexed question of investitures was again brought forward and discussed.

The custom had gradually been assumed by European rulers of giving investiture by the ring and crosier which constituted the insignia of the Bishop's sacred office. This ceremony, as historians remind us, implied, and often was in fact, the delivery of the authority of the Church into the hands of the Civil power.[1] The transference of these symbols to the King on the death of a prelate, enabled him to confer them upon any person whom he should choose, with or without reference to the Pontiff, the visible Head of the Church. It was this encroachment upon ecclesiastical rights which Gregory wished to check.

The practice, besides opening the way to simony and many other abuses of the time, also favoured the placing in benefices and abbeys relatives and partizans who were totally unfit for their office. The blow thus aimed against lay investitures "struck at the root," says the historian, "of their personal importance, since ecclesiastical preferments were usually bestowed as appanages on the younger sons of illustrious houses."[2] "Under cover of this usurpation, the lands of a church were let for the benefit of the Crown, to

[1] "The Sovereign," says Hume, "had in reality the sole power of appointing prelates."

[2] *Historical Pictures of the Middle Ages.*

speculators who endeavoured to extort all that they could get from the impoverished tenants. The evils of such an iniquitous system may easily be conceived. The property that was originally bestowed for the purpose of promoting piety and religion, was made a curse instead of a blessing."[1] "For the Church which early Christian princes had cherished and protected, now treated as a captive or slave, [was] pillaged and spoiled or turned to a means of provision for worthless favourites who wasted in thoughtless luxury the portion given them for the service of God."[2]

Gregory hoped to put an end to this scandalous state of affairs by the exercise of free voting and by reserving the right of canonical election of Bishops and Abbots exclusively to the Chapters. At the same time, the Pontiff did not intend that prelates receiving authority from the Church should set at naught that of the Sovereigns in whose countries the Bishoprics were situated. Nor was it his intention that they should be exempt from being held responsible for any infraction of State laws. The claim was simple and decisive, and set forth that no investitures should be made except at the hands of the reigning Pontiff. It was further agreed that "whoever had received, in consideration of any present, any grade or office of Holy Orders could no longer exercise his ministry, and that all those who received from laymen the investiture of a church should be excommunicated as well as the lay donors." "Who could presume," remarks an authority on ecclesiastical law, "to place the sceptre on a level with the crosier: the one, the conquest of human pride, the other, the gift of Divine mercy. The one conducing to the vain glories of earth, and the other pointing the way to Heaven? As gold surpasses lead, so does the Episcopal transcend the Imperial dignity."[3]

[1] *Church History.* Martineau.
[2] Churton.
[3] *Essays on Ecclesiastical Biography.* Right Hon. Sir James Stephen.

As soon as the Council was ended, the Pontiff sent off copies of the decrees to Henry, intimating that as they would come into operation at once, it was as well that he should be made acquainted with their import without loss of time. In a letter by which they were accompanied, Gregory assured him of his determination to carry out the projected reforms at all risks. He reminded the monarch, "that when he was appointed to the administration of religious houses, he had restored order and regularity in them, and now that he was elected Pope, it was no less his duty to interfere where he discerned evil."

The envoys received a surly acknowledgment from the King, as soon as he had gathered from their despatches the tenor of their embassy. The denunciation of married clerics affected him so far, that the crusade against immorality would reflect chiefly upon himself, and compel him to purify his court from the licentiousness which prevailed there with his sanction and approval.

The laws levelled against lay investitures entailed more serious personal consequences, besides threatening a limitation of his power over the election of the clergy. But the publication of the decrees against simony caused even more irritation to the monarch, since he had relied upon the practice as a profitable source of income. The terrible examples to be made of those who continued to afford him means for his extravagance, would, as he well knew, deter the culprits from contributing any longer to his coffers. "He sold his bishoprics to the highest bidders, or to those who could best flatter his vices, and after he had thus sold a bishopric, if another competitor offered more money or more acceptably praised his crimes, he deposed the former as a simoniac, and ordained the other in his place, whence it happened that many cities had two Bishops at once and both of them unworthy."[1] We are further told by a Protestant writer that "such was the sad case of the country,

[1] *Lives of the Roman Pontiffs.*

that scarcely had a single ecclesiastic been confirmed by the imperial crown gratuitously. No sooner was a See vacant, than a swarm of ambitious churchmen endeavoured by offers of money to obtain it."[1] "Thus," says the historian, "those who coveted but dared not directly seize upon the possessions of the Church, had obtained their end by thrusting into her benefices minions of their own, who had nothing ecclesiastical but the name."[2] Those clerics who had obtained their positions by uncanonical, though not in every case by simoniacal, means, were naturally reluctant to relinquish them. Nor were the laymen who had usurped the privileges and revenues of the Church willing to yield without protest their authority and their rich emoluments.

The numerous disputes and disturbances consequent upon this question were protracted for nearly half a century. They were at length ended at the Diet of Worms, held in 1122, and at which Calixtus II. presided. At this Council, which was attended by representatives from most of the European courts, including that of Germany, the following points were decided: "That the Emperor might give the investment of that regalia only by the sceptre, and that the elected should receive the fiefs and other like benefits granted by the Sovereigns to the Church. The investment by ring and crosier was to be reserved solely for the Pope." Already in 1107, sixteen years before the passing of the decrees, Henry I. of England had yielded, making however the stipulation that Bishops should on their appointment take the oath of fealty to the Crown.[3] In France, we learn, investiture by ring and crosier had never been the custom, and yet "the Bishops had

[1] *History of Italian Republics.* J. S. Sismondi.

[2] *Lives of the Roman Pontiffs* translated by the Chevalier D'Artaud de Montor, 1871.

[3] That the custom of trafficking in benefices survived in this country, even as late as the last half century, is evident from J. C. Sismondi, a writer of that date. "England is the only country in Christendom where simony is openly practised and vindicated. We do not hear it whispered as in Roman Catholic countries, it is openly proclaimed in every newspaper."

been loyal to the French Kings and the legitimate influence of the latter in appointments had not been nullified."

At the Conference of Chalons the Archbishop of Treves, on behalf of Henry, claimed that monarch's right to the investiture by ring and crosier. In reply to his speech the Bishop of Placentia expressed in the name of the Pope the following opinion,—"The Church redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ must no more be enslaved, and she would be the slave of princes could she not choose a prelate without consulting Emperor or King. It is a crime against God for a prince to give the investiture by the ring, the cross and the pastoral staff, and the prelates discredit their country if they submit their hands consecrated to the Body and Blood of our Lord to the hands of laymen reeking with blood."[1]

Furious at what he considered an encroachment on the royal prerogative Henry summoned a meeting of those prelates and abbots mentioned in the decree as having been habitually addicted to simony and incontinence. The city of Worms was in a buzz of excitement and "thither flocked all the discontented; the houses were crowded with priests' families and buyers and sellers of holy offices."

The meeting as one might well suppose was a turbulent one, but all were agreed in their denunciation of the statutes just passed. The observance of the clearly expounded laws, especially those relating to the celibacy of the clergy, would affect the whole course of their lives. "Are we to live like angels?" they passionately exclaimed. "We will renounce the priesthood rather than our wives."

It is somewhat remarkable that Henry was the only monarch in Europe who espoused the cause of the married priests. "It made the work of reform easier for Gregory, and the confusion and tumult consequent upon the change gradually subsided before the firm enforcement of the decree." "This first conflict gradually subsided in course of time," remarks another historian in almost similar words, "through

[1] Fleury, iv. p. 405.

the firmness and perseverance of the Pontiff, nor was there any one among the European sovereigns disposed to become the patron of clergymen's wives."[1] Centuries after "our own imperious Elizabeth, when addressing the wife of Archbishop Parker, could find for her no other legitimate appellation than the generic name of *woman.*"

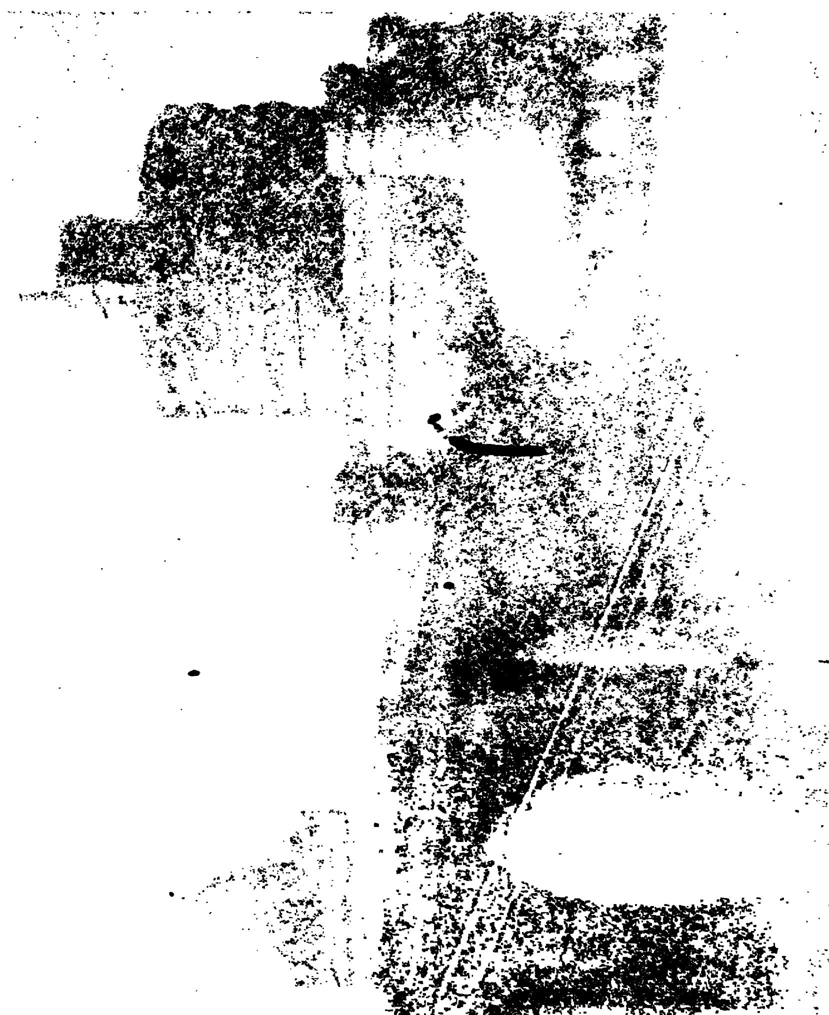
Ever since his election to the Holy See the Pontiff had desired a personal interview with the King. He was convinced that lasting benefit to the monarch would result from a meeting and a consultation upon the matters in dispute. Legate after Legate was sent to Germany to request Henry's presence in Rome "to give satisfactory explanation concerning the disorders of his clergy and to destroy the abuses of simony." The peaceful intentions of Gregory were defeated by the defiant bearing of the King, who turned a deaf ear to all the Pontiff's messages, and treated his envoys with marked insolence and contempt.

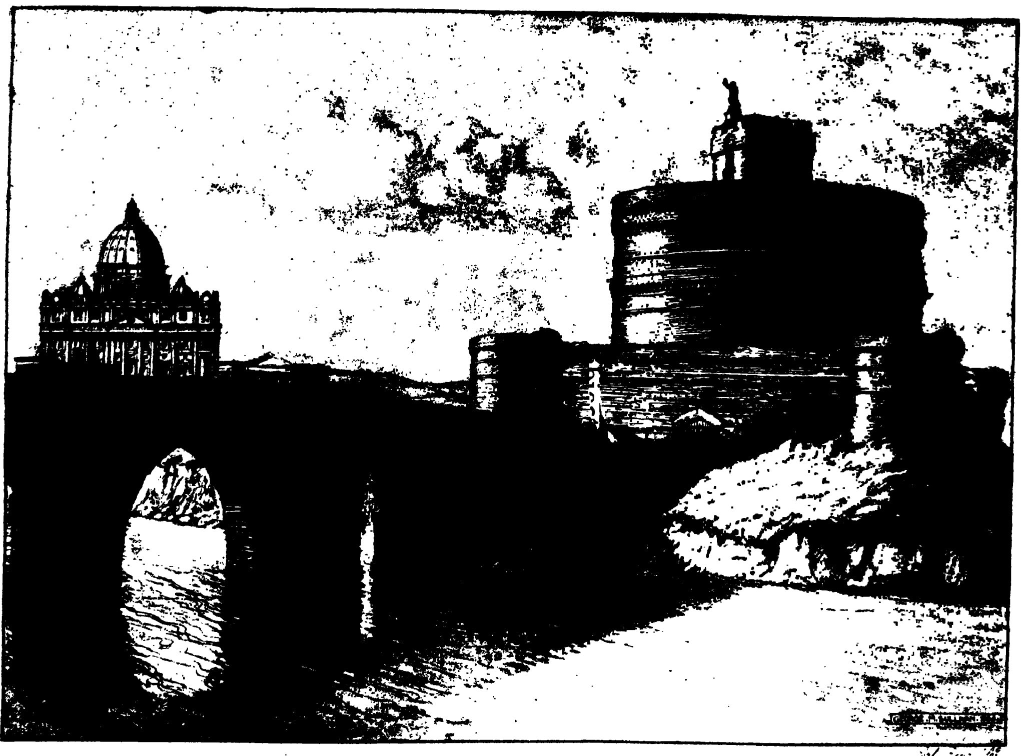
But the voice of the Church could not thus be silenced, and at length Henry was threatened with punishment from the Holy See, if he refused to correct the evils to which his attention had so repeatedly been drawn. "It is better," writes the Pope to Beatrice and Matilda, "to resist a King for his own salvation, even to shedding our own blood, than to lose ourselves with him by consenting to iniquity to please him."

The menace of excommunication to which Gregory refers, and which was more strongly worded than the veiled warnings which had preceded it, arrested for a time the headlong course of the King. He promised to check the licentiousness of the clergy to which his own life furnished so full an example and to put an end to simoniacal practices.

Unfortunately his resolutions were defeated by the death of Hanno, Archbishop of Cologne, which took place early in December of this year (1075). Henry had held his late guardian in deep respect, he being the only man of whom he

[1] *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History.* John L. von Mosheim.





Castle of St. Angelo.

stood in awe. For nearly twenty years had the prelate, whom the Church has canonised, sought to bring him to a sense of his temporal weakness as Gregory had of his spiritual shortcomings. Now the stern voice of reproof was hushed, no more would Hanno stand in his path, and the hands that endeavoured to restrain him from dishonour were folded meekly in death. The King, predisposed to vice and surrounded by flatterers and debauched companions, was now free to pursue unhindered his career to utter ruin. The disturbances in Italy and in Rome itself, fostered by his partizans, were the source of much concern to the Holy Father and to his friends in Tuscany. Although they caused much distress and annoyance at the time, these insurrections were the germs of the contests and convulsions which were to follow and by which Italy finally shook herself free from German control.

Among the most striking objects of Rome during the Pontificate of Gregory was the Castle of St Angelo, whose massive towers rendered it almost impregnable. The fortress at that time consisted of a quadrangular basement surmounted by a building of three stories, reaching to a height of two hundred and thirty feet and commanding a magnificent view of the Capitol. It had been built by the Emperor Hadrian for his tomb, and received its present familiar name from the following incident. In the sixth century Rome was devastated by a plague caused by the decay of vegetable matter borne into the city by the inundation of the Tiber. Towards the end of the year 589 it increased in violence and carried off many of the population including Pelagius the reigning Pontiff. The peculiar character of the pestilence being prolonged fits of sneezing and yawning, Gregory I. who had succeeded to the Papal Chair decreed that "God bless you," should be said to those who sneezed and that the sign of the Cross should be made over the mouths of those who yawned.[1] He further decided that a tour should be made

[1] It is curious to note that in many country places the practice still survives and old nurses repeat the words "God bless you," to their young charges when they sneeze.

round the plague-stricken city imploring God's mercy on its unhappy people. The congregations started from six different churches at various points, that from St Peter's bearing in the midst the picture of Our Lady said to have been painted by St Luke. On arriving at the Mausoleum the people were astonished to behold the figure of an angel above the building who, at their approach, sheathed his drawn sword. From that moment the plague, we are told, decreased in virulence and, "whereas on the outward journey twenty-four succumbed to its effects, when they returned no one died and soon all traces of the pestilence disappeared." To commemorate the event a figure of St Michael the Archangel in marble, and which was afterwards replaced by one of bronze, was placed over the Mausoleum which was henceforth known by the name of the Castle of St Angelo.

During the reign of Gregory VII. the fortress was inhabited by a powerful noble named Cenci. He was the son of a former prefect of Rome, and his dissolute life and open acts of simony had drawn upon him the displeasure of the Church. Maddened by the excommunication which followed the murder and robbery of his uncle, he placed himself at the head of a band of malcontents, who robbed the pilgrims as they came to lay their gifts at the feet of the Pontiff.

He offered his services to Germany, and received in return immunity to pillage and levy tolls upon travellers who crossed the Bridge of St Angelo which spans the Tiber. Years ago he had taken the part of Cadalous, and since the defeat of that anti-pope he had revenged himself by constant incursions into the territories of Beatrice and Matilda, who had been on the side of Alexander, but the princesses were so faithfully served by their subjects that Cenci was beaten back at every point. Foiled in this attempt to corrupt the loyal Tuscans, the plotter conceived the project of capturing Gregory and sending him as a prisoner to Henry. He carefully laid his plans, and only awaited an opportunity, when

the unsuspecting Pope should be unattended, to carry them into effect.

In the early mediæval times it was usual for the faithful to spend the night preceding Christmas in certain churches which remained open and in which lights were kept burning Even now, when other vigils are no longer thus observed Mass is still said at midnight on the eve of the festive natal day of our Lord.

Successive Pontiffs had made it a rule to celebrate the Mass on this holy vigil in S. Maria Maggiori, so called because it was, as its name implies, the largest church in Rome dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. It was built upon the ruins of a temple of Diana, and is sometimes known as St Mary of the Snow. This title was given to the basilica from a legend which relates that ere the church was built and while the site was yet uncertain, heavy snow fell one August on the ground on which the basilica was afterwards erected. Liberius, the reigning Pontiff, hearing of the remarkable occurrence, proceeded to the spot, and kneeling in the snow traced with his finger a plan of the future building. The incident was afterwards commemorated by a representation in bronze bas-relief on the front of the altar. The church had, in course of years, gradually fallen into decay, and the neighbouring streets, inhabited by the lowest of the peasantry, were considered unsafe for well-dressed pedestrians. But Gregory whose frequent visits to the homes of the poor had made his person familiar to them, and who often preached in their church, had nothing to fear from his children. Even the most ferocious of the brigands who haunted the Campagna treated him with respect and welcomed him as a true friend of the unfortunate.

The usual congregation, therefore, of St Mary Major, to give its English equivalent, was generally composed of the peasants and wandering shepherds, whose calling has been for ever ennobled from their having been the first worshippers of our Lord. On the vigil of Christmas the numbers were

generally augmented by more fashionable persons who came from considerable distances to assist at the midnight Mass, and to receive the Pontifical blessing.

The feast of the Nativity of 1075 was one that was fated to be memorable in the annals of the lives of the Popes. It was heralded by a terrific storm of wind and rain which lasted all day, and the water rushing down the slopes like a deluge made travelling a matter of serious discomfort and even danger.

Gregory intended to be present at the midnight service and in spite of the warnings and prayers of his attendants was not to be dissuaded from his purpose by the forces of the warring elements. The Holy Father knew full well what a disappointment his absence would be to his children, who looked to receive his blessing at that holy season, and resolved at all risks to be with them. As was his rule when visiting poor churches, he dispensed with the services of an escort, and accompanied by a few personal friends he resolutely mounted the Esquiline Hill, undeterred by the roaring wind and rushing waters.

Only a few of the most hardy could venture out in such a tempest, and, consequently, contrary to the usual custom, the attendance was but sparse.

From the earliest times it had been the rule to divide the sexes, the men, therefore, had their seats on the south or Epistle side, while the women sat on the north or Gospel side of the building. According to the old chronicles the Emperors had their solium or throne "in the upper end of the men's apartment next to the chancel, and the Empress in the women's apartment."

It was the custom since the fifth century for the Emperors or their representatives who were present on the vigil of Christmas to stand "sword in hand during the reading of the Gospel" to signify their readiness to uphold their faith. Charlemagne himself, with drawn sword, stood before the people, and in a clear and sonorous voice, more chastened

than when it thundered forth his orders on the battlefield, "read aloud the Gospel of Peace." But now there was no Emperor as of old to take his place during the celebration of Mass and to testify by his presence his love for God and his obedience to the Church he founded. Gregory was painfully reminded of this as his eye rested sadly upon the vacant throne which Henry might have filled had he received the imperial crown. From the heart of the Pontiff there rose up to Heaven a prayer that the King might even yet prove to be worthy of the privilege.

The service commenced, and Gregory's voice mingling with the roar of the gale was almost inaudible to those at the back of the church. As he intoned the hymn of the angels on the first Christmas Eve, a sudden change took place in the weather, and the wind abruptly ceased its prolonged roaring. As the tempest abated, strange and dreadful sounds were heard in the lull of the storm—sounds which struck terror to every woman's heart and filled the men with alarm. The prayers of the faithful were interrupted by the ring of steel and the clash of arms, and from the dark shadows cast by the massive pillars there glided forth the forms of armed men. Heedless of the shrieks of the women, and roughly thrusting aside the men of the congregation who attempted in vain to bar their progress, the invaders of the sanctuary rushed towards the altar at which, disregarding the interruption, Gregory was continuing his Mass. Undeterred by his piety and courage they tore down the rails which divided the sanctuary from the choir and threw themselves upon the Pontiff, who made no appeal and offered no resistance. He was quickly overpowered and seriously hurt both in the forehead and right hand by his cowardly assailants, who "rained down a shower of blows" upon his venerable head and stripped him of his Pontifical vestments.

He bore it all silently and unflinchingly, and, though anticipating certain martyrdom, held his bleeding head as erect as when but two years ago it had been crowned by the

tiara. Turning to his friends, who were preparing to avenge him, Gregory earnestly begged them in the name of the Prince of Peace not to further desecrate the sacred building by causing bloodshed in order to effect his rescue. Silently he followed his captors down the long aisles, and with "a strength perfected in weakness" prepared to meet his fate.

Apprehensive of pursuit Cenci, who was in command of the band, ordered the Pope to be thrown across a horse in front of one of his followers, and in that ignominious manner conveyed him to St Angelo. Arrived at the Castle the aged Pontiff, dizzy from loss of blood and from the shock of the savage attack, slowly and painfully toiled up the steep steps leading to the tower without uttering one word of expostulation or comment. Scarcely had Cenci congratulated himself on the success of his plot when a murmur from below, gathering in strength and volume as it approached, warned him that the populace had risen in defence of their revered Pastor. On seeing him brutally set upon and carried off a prisoner the priests and panic-stricken congregation rushed madly into the streets, uttering loud cries of terror and dismay. The inhabitants, roused from their midnight rest, rapidly armed themselves and hastened to the place of the Pope's imprisonment. The massive gates, which in the hurry had not been securely fastened, were soon forced, and the Roman citizens crowded up the stairs to free or to avenge.

Cenci would have been torn in pieces by his infuriated countrymen had not Gregory himself interposed on his behalf. Livid with fear, he cast himself at the Pontiff's feet saying, "Oh, Father, shield me and show mercy to me! Inflict on me some penance and appeal, as thou well knowest how to do, to these people in arms against me by the just judgment of God. All sinful as I am, take me into thy holy hands and give me time to repent."

Gregory, whose austerity of manner concealed his tender feelings, was easily moved to mercy. He looked upon his

fallen foe with eyes of pity, and in gentle tones addressed to him the following words: "My son, the gate of life may yet open for thee if thou wilt repent with all thy heart." Cenci readily promised amendment, and repeatedly protested that he would fulfil any penance, however severe, if the Pope would but forgive him. Gregory replied, "The evil thou hast done to me I forgive thee, but what thou hast done to the Church thou must expatiate as I command thee. Thou must first of all go to Jerusalem, and if thou livest to come back, thou shalt place thyself under my guidance so that, if it be possible, thou mayest yet receive the grace of God, and after having become an example of iniquity, thou mayest become an example of repentance." So saying he raised his still bleeding hand over the culprit and gave him the pardon he desired.

Cenci, with bowed head and abashed mien, passed quickly through the menacing and angry throng, and mixing with the crowd was soon lost to view in the darkness.

The people now pressed round the wounded Pontiff whose grey hairs were matted with blood, and with solicitous care they tore up strips of linen with which they bound up his wounds. "My children," said he, "let us now go to the church and offer up the Holy Sacrifice," and supported by his friends he retraced his tottering steps to S. Maria Maggiori. Leading the way to the altar, where fresh vestments were placed upon him, he continued the prayers at the point at which he had been interrupted. With a voice almost inaudible amidst the general commotion which prevailed among the agitated congregation, he recited the collects as though he had forgotten the outrage of which he had been the victim.

In spite of the increasing weakness which threatened every instant to overpower him the indomitable Pontiff in trembling tones read aloud the Gospel of the day which narrates the birth of the Redeemer. At the conclusion, overcome by an emotion he could no longer control, he raised his

bandaged hand above his faithful flock. Making with it the sign of the cross over their bowed heads he invoked upon them the blessing of the Holy Trinity.

It is highly probable that the custom of blessing the congregation, now universally adopted in the Catholic church, took its rise from this incident. The action is not mentioned by earlier historians nor by Gregory's predecessors, and it had not become a common practice even at the end of the century in which it originated.

Gregory's presence of mind and courage could not fail to have a soothing effect upon the tumultuous passions which were seething in the breasts of his liberators. His serenity at such a moment of intense excitement calmed his high-spirited countrymen and averted what would otherwise have been a scene of wild confusion, strife and loss of life.

Cenci, however penitent he appeared to be, did not after all perform the penance imposed upon him by the forgiving Pontiff.[1] Under pretence of preparing for a pilgrimage he collected all his goods and his family and retired with them to Germany, where he was openly received at Court. Gregory was of too generous a nature to take revenge for personal injuries, and neither then nor at any other time did he make mention or complaint to the King of the countenance which had been given to his assailant. "This reserve," comments the historian, "is to be noticed in a letter he wrote to Henry on the sixth day of the ides of January, thirteen days after-

[1] "Contrition and confession" also require satisfaction, that is the fulfilment of the penance enjoined by the priest ere he gives the absolution. We find in Holy Writ that though God forgave Adam and Eve for their disobedience and promised them a Redeemer, they were driven from Paradise and henceforth lived a life of penance. Moses' want of confidence in God was forgiven and he still remained leader of the children of Israel, but he was punished by not being allowed to enter the Promised Land. Numbers xx. 12. David also was pardoned his great sin, but he was punished in this world by the death of his son, and we learn from the Scriptures of the penitential spirit in which he accepted his penance. 2 Samuel xii. 13, etc.

wards when he must still have been suffering from his wounds."

Although Gregory was disposed to take no further notice of the assault, the Cardinals considered the matter more gravely, and were of opinion that by the sacrilegious attack upon the Pontiff, the dignity and authority of the Church, which he represented as Head had been publicly outraged. It was evident that the King, if not the instigator of the act, was in reality the abettor, and in punishing so flagrant an offence against the Holy See the blow must also fall upon him as one of the principal offenders. Appeals for his reform had been useless, gentle words and persuasive means had been powerless to move his heart or to procure any outward sign of repentance or submission. The Church, wearied by his continued obstinacy and roused to anger by his disregard of her commands, now demanded that an example should be made, and Gregory had no alternative but to launch forth in her name the penalties of denunciation. Matters had now reached a crisis which had been hastened by Henry's tacit encouragment of the attack upon the Pontiff. The sentence which had so long hung suspended like the sword of Damocles over his head, and which had been deferred by the forgiving spirit of Gregory, was suffered to fall without further delay.

The first intimation, we are told, that the King received of the fact, was a message conveyed to him by a special envoy from Rome that his presence would be expected at a Council to be held in that city at the end of January.

Long before the hour fixed for the meeting the streets leading to the Pontifical palace were crowded with eager pedestrians, who were drawn thither by curiosity or by a desire to obtain a glimpse of Gregory himself. Their gaze followed with much interest the imposing procession of Cardinals, Bishops, Abbots, heads of monastic houses, nobles and knights, with their numerous attendants, who came from all parts of Europe to testify to their zeal for the Holy See and their devotion to its Vicar.

Beatrice and Matilda, on hearing of the outrage upon their beloved pastor, had hurried to St Peter's, and by their solicitous nursing had so far restored his shattered nerves that, by the end of January, he was sufficiently recovered to be present at the council.

The princesses, together with the poet Donizo, were present at the assembly and were, "by their actions and words," as he himself tells us, "dear to all, both small and great."

Gregory, still pale and weak from the shock of Cenci's maltreatment, presided over the large concourse of clerics and laymen—"that enthusiastic throng of mitred and armed adherents." "He listened to harmonies which might not unfitly have accompanied the worship of Eden, and joined in anthems which in far distant ages had been sung by blessed saints in dark crypts and by triumphant martyrs in their dying agonies, and inhaled the incense symbolical of the prayers offered by the Catholic Church to her eternal Head."[1]

The singing was ended, the perfumes of the incense had died away, there was a pause of expectancy; but no sign came from Henry, no representative, no message.

At length the Pope, rising slowly from his throne, amid the deathlike silence of the council, proceeded to pronounce upon the King the solemn form of excommunication. This is the most awful punishment that can fall upon a Catholic since, as its name implies, it deprives the offender of all communication with the Church.

To Gregory, the ordeal was most trying, and the voice broken by emotion, and the tears which coursed unchecked down his careworn cheeks, were eloquent witnesses of the sorrow with which he performed his painful duty. He bore the King no ill-will, and even while passing sentence upon him, would willingly have yielded his life, if by so doing he could save the young monarch from the consequences

[1] Right Honourable Sir James Stephen.

of his folly. Everyone present was aware of this and knew that at the least token of repentance on Henry's part he would most gladly and immediately revoke the anathema.

Unfortunately for Gregory's hopes the excommunication came at a time when the King was least likely to bend his proud head to his merited punishment. He had just succeeded in crushing a rising of the Saxons and had re-entered Goslar in triumph. Flushed with pride at a conquest which he believed would be final, he sent a letter to Beatrice, and, unaware of the decree issued against him, had enclosed a missive for the Pontiff. The almost threatening tone of his communication showed clearly to his friends that he was beyond the control of the Church. Even from his relative he withheld the respect due to her rank and age, and concluded his uncourteous epistle abruptly with the following words, "And I forbid that anyone know, except you, my aunt Beatrice, and your daughter Matilda.

Realising as he did the dreadful consequences which his sentence entailed upon him, and the probable ill effect it would have on the allegiance of his subjects, Henry lost all control over his passion. Lashed into fury he threw prudence to the winds, and by his subsequent acts of retaliation for ever dispelled any hopes that his friends entertained of his reconciliation to the Church.

Hurrying to Worms he hastily convened a meeting of Bishops, whose simoniacal practices had made them too dependent upon him to resist his will, even if they had been so inclined.[1]

These obsequious prelates, anxious to please their tyrannical master, voted at his desire for the deposition of Gregory and

[1] Among the married prelates represented at this meeting, the following, "Otton Evêque de Constance, Burkard Evêque de Basle, Burchard Evêque de Lausanne et Hermenfried Evêque de Sion avaient encouru l'excommunication du Pape Gregoire VII. pour avoir refusé de se soumettre aux nouveaux décrets de ce Pontife que proscrivaient le mariage des prêtres." Lambert d'Aschaff.

the substitution of a partisan of their own to fill the Pontifical Chair.

Having thus sounded the note of defiance Henry, in a contumelious letter addressed "to the monk Hildebrand," set forth the sentence which the so-called *council* had pronounced against him. This daring and impious document concluded with the following appeal to the Romans. "Rise up against him then, my faithful subjects, and let him who is faithful to me be the first to condemn! We do not bid you shed his blood for, after his deposition, life will be harder to him than death, but compel him to descend and, if he refuse to do so, place in the Apostolic Chair another elected by us with the common consent of the Bishops who can and will heal the wounds which this one has inflicted upon the Church."

This insolent address was signed by Henry and those of the prelates who, like himself, had fallen under the ban of the Church or who were in too much fear of the King and of the Assembly to refuse to add their names. A cleric of Parma named Roland was commissioned to be the bearer of this insulting message.

In anticipation of the presence of the King or his representative to answer to the recently issued decree of excommunication, a Synod had been convened by Gregory to be held in the basilica of St John Lateran on April 27 (1076).

The meeting was well attended by Cardinals from the European Courts, and there were also present one hundred and ten Bishops besides a goodly array of abbots, priors and regular clergy, anxious at this juncture to prove their allegiance to the Pontiff and to defend the interests of the Church. Among those of the laity who were present were many foreign princes and lords as well as Italian nobles and civic dignitaries.

The Countess and her daughter, whose goodness and charity were well known to the Romans, were seated among the laity but near the throne, and with very different feelings awaited the expected embassy from the German Court.

# Synod at St John Lateran

Although at the Council held in January the form of excommunication had been uttered against her nephew, Beatrice believed that the young King was not aware of the danger into which he had heedlessly drifted. She imagined that directly he found how serious his situation was he would hasten to assure the Pontiff of his contrition. She was therefore in a state of restless anxiety on his account and fearful lest any accident should prevent his presence and explanations. Matilda on the other hand had no such sanguine expectations; she concluded from what she knew of her cousin's obstinate nature that he would be defiant. Even the severest punishment the Church could inflict would not, she believed have power to move him, and the sequel shows that she was right in her surmise.

The hum of subdued but earnest conversation was hushed at the appearance of the Holy Father, and the Assembly in breathless silence rose to greet him and bent the knee to receive his blessing. Onward he came crowned with the tiara and borne aloft in the sedia gestatoria from which, for more than three centuries, it had been the custom of the Popes on solemn occasions to see and be seen by their faithful children. As he ascended the steps of the throne the audience became seated and directed towards his serene countenance faces on which expressions of anxiety and curiosity were evidently struggling for the mastery.

Beatrice, pale with apprehension and almost fainting from the excess of her emotion, was somewhat reassured by the calm demeanour of Gregory. She fixed her gaze upon him, trying in vain to discern what was passing in his active brain, especially when any unwonted bustle without the Council Hall appeared to herald the approach of a courier from Germany. Her expectancy was reflected in the features of all present, and the questions relative to Church government which were brought forward for discussion received but a divided attention.

When the business of the day was concluded, Gregory

waited for a while in anticipation of a message from the King. The monarch, however, made no reponse, and at length the Pontiff dismissed the Synod, desiring the Council to be in attendance on the following day.

Beatrice was quite overcome by the agony of mind which she had suffered during these long hours of suspense, and when she rose from her seat her tottering limbs refused to support her. Leaning upon Matilda's arm she slowly and painfully crossed the audience-chamber, followed by a murmur of sympathy from the Assembly who realised what a strain upon her nerves the prolonged uncertainty must be.

Scarcely had the Pontiff ascended his throne on the second day's sitting of the Council when, to the relief of all present, the arrival of an Ambassador from Germany was announced. At this culminating point of excitement all tongues seemed loosened and, notwithstanding the presence of the Pope, the sound of voices eagerly discussing the probable tenor of the message rose and fell like the sighing of autumn winds, until Gregory by a gesture commanded silence.

Roland the cleric, who was in charge of the embassy, delivered his credentials, we learn, in a manner befitting the envoy of so defiant a chief, and with an utter disregard of the consequences to which his daring exposed him. On being admitted he boldly entered the hall, and advanced with long strides towards the foot of the Papal Chair without any mark of deference or respect to the presence in which he stood. In a high voice, the insolence of which thrilled the assemblage with indignation, he ordered Gregory, in the name of his master, "to immediately renounce the throne of St Peter." Turning towards the panic-stricken clergy he thus continued, "My brethren, I have to announce to you that you must present yourselves before the King at the approaching feast of Pentecost to receive a Pope from his appointment, as this one is now known to be not a Pope but a devouring wolf."[1] The temerity of the speaker nearly

[1] *Lives of the Roman Pontiffs.* The Chevalier D'Artaud de Montor, 1871.

drew upon himself the punishment which, it must be owned, he richly deserved. John, Bishop of Porto, a man of irascible temper, rose hastily from his seat and, forgetting in his anger that the Pontiff was present, cried out, "Seize him!" At once the electrified listeners were roused into action, and the building resounded with the clash of steel and faction cries, as the nobles, with drawn swords, rushed forward to dispatch the daring messenger. The Prefect of Rome, who was in attendance, hearing the clamour and believing the Pope to be in danger, burst into the council chamber at the head of his soldiers, who ranged themselves round the throne and prepared to defend it with their lives. It would have been Roland's last hour on earth had not Gregory, with an agility which, considering his age and weakness, was remarkable, sprung from his throne and gone to his assistance.[1] Making a lane for himself between the gleaming swords, he placed his spare form before that of the cleric, and thus for the second time rescued an emissary of his enemy from a justly merited punishment. With uplifted hand he commanded silence and appealed to their sense of justice not to wreak their vengeance upon an unarmed man. Having by his authority succeeded in restoring the audience to a semblance of order, he proceeded by a few words of counsel to moderate their anger and calm their excitement. Roland, who had prepared for instant death, stood ashamed and abashed before them all, overcome not by the menaces and theatening gestures of his foes, but by the intervention of the Pope whom he had so grossly insulted. Casting a look of gratitude and entreaty at the pale, but kind face of Gregory, he slipped away amidst the general confusion never again to be the enemy of the good old man to whose magnanimity he owed his life and safety.

"My children," said the Pontiff, as he dismissed the assembly, "let not the peace of the Church be disturbed. Behold, we

[1] Lecture delivered at the opening of the Presbyterian Divinity Hall by N. M'Michael, D.D.

live as in those dangerous times spoken of by the Scriptures, when men shall be lovers of themselves, greedy, proud and disobedient. It is necessary that scandals come, and the Lord hath said that He sent us forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. We must be as wise as serpents, but also as mild as doves. We must hate no one, but bear with the madmen who will violate the law of God. For a long time," concluded Gregory, "we have lived in peace. It is the will of God that the harvest shall again be watered with the blood of the saints. Let us prepare for martyrdom, if need be, for the love of God, and let nothing separate us from the charity of Jesus Christ."

The Synod met again next day, and on the entrance of Gregory rose *en masse*, greeting him with loud ovations mingled with protestations of anger against the authors of the recent outrages upon his person and authority. Beatrice and Matilda were again present—the last time that the former ever graced a public assemblage of her friends.

All eyes were turned upon the widow and her beautiful daughter as they knelt to receive the Pontifical blessing for, as relatives of the German King, the occasion of the meeting was a sadly personal one. "Great was the sorrow," records the sympathetic Donizo, "of Beatrice and Matilda who, always regarding the Holy Father with reverence, viewed with horror the perfidy of the proud monarch."

The letters of which Roland had been the bearer were discussed by the Council, but not with that calmness and deliberation which generally characterised such assemblies as that which was now convened. Gregory's habit of self-restraint made him appear the only person in that vast concourse wholly unmoved by the proceedings. With a simple gesture he at once commanded their attention, and having quieted their protests of anger against the insults he had received proceeded to the business arranged for the day. This included the passing of a law which enacted that the title of Pope should be reserved for the Head of the

Catholic Church and "that no one should be allowed to take that name for himself or to apply it to anyone but the Sovereign Pontiff."

Henceforth the successor of St Peter alone was to be the common Father of the faithful of all tongues, and in all lands the one shepherd of the sheep confided to his care by divine authority, and for whom he was responsible before the throne of God.

Ere the Council dispersed they unanimously voted a confirmation of the sentence already passed upon Henry. Again, but this time with a ring of hopelessness in his voice, did the Pontiff at their request repeat the words of the ban.

To one listener Gregory's tones, ordinarily so loving and tender, beat upon her ears with the reverberation of thunder, and sounded the death-knell of all her hopes. Beatrice sat pale and silent, a picture of stricken grief and shame. Her head was bowed and her hands clasped in supplications to Heaven for repentance and forgiveness for her misguided nephew. She was horrified at his conduct and humbled to the earth at the anathemas launched against him by the Church of which he was so unworthy a member, and whose authority he so openly defied. The shadow of his disgrace clouded her remaining days, and as the scathing words which separated him from the Church of his fathers fell from the unwilling lips of Gregory, "they sent a chill to her heart from which she never recovered."

Far different feelings, however, agitated Matilda. Her warm attachment to the Pontiff was mingled with "gratitude towards him who stretched out his hand against the foreign yoke, and who could dash it to pieces by his anathemas."[1]

She had not yet learned that lesson of tolerance for the defects of others which comes from mature years and experience. Her stern sense of justice recognised only the fitness of the sentence passed upon her cousin, and she

[1] M. Abel François Villemain

discerned therein nothing of severity. She saw in Henry's act of retaliation against a merited rebuke from the Holy Father a fresh instance of German aggression, and the pride of her race was wounded to the quick by the profanity of his conduct—conduct unbecoming in a king and a Christian. His high-handed behaviour revived the remembrance of the indignities her mother had suffered and which she herself as a child had shared at the hands of the late Emperor. Agnes, too, though she had since bitterly repented, had followed the same line of antagonism to the Church. She, as Regent of Germany, had attempted to thrust an anti-pope of her own choosing into the Chair of Saint Peter, and Matilda thought with bitterness of the sacrifices which were required of her ere the sacrilegious design was frustrated. She remembered that her brief girlhood had lost its sunshine by the marriage she had entered upon as an unloved bride as the price of her stepfather's deliverance of the Papal Throne. Before her rose the familiar forms of her people who had fallen in the battlefield in defence of the Holy See, and her brow darkened at the remembrance of the sufferings they had endured. She pictured the bright faces whose welcoming smiles would greet her no more on earth. Her mood softened, and tears of regret obliterated for a time the sorrowful vision which would never be entirely effaced. As these painful memories quickly surged through her brain Matilda raised her bowed head and her glance fell upon the slight figure of the Holy Father. Her wandering thoughts were recalled at the sight of the venerable Pontiff who had been so shamelessly outraged in his office and in his person, and whose assailant was, as she was aware, held in honour at the German Court. She became filled with a lively indignation against the monarch who could countenance such a cowardly attack upon the Head of that Church of which he professed to be a member. His unfilial treatment of the Holy Father aroused within her the resentment which had been unconsciously, even to herself, slumbering within her

breast for years. It was impossible, she felt, to regard with any sentiments but those of repugnance a prince who had proved himself a stranger to all feelings of virtue, religion or honour. With this estimation of his character Matilda anticipated a continuation of the sacrilegious acts which had hitherto marked his reign—a foreboding which subsequent events fully justified.

There was an inclination on the part of the Council to include in the excommunication those prelates, priests and abbots who had appended their signatures to the letter of deposition at Worms. To this suggestion Gregory, always ready to pardon, would not give his consent. He was unwilling, he said, "to deprive them of the hopes of reconciliation and forgiveness. Many of those who had subscribed have been made to do so by force, or have yielded to the presence of the King or the menaces of their fellow-prelates. They will, perchance, be visited by repentance and be ready to ask pardon. For these, therefore, we will leave them till the feast of Saint Peter, with the condition that, if they have not before that time, either in their own persons or by envoys, made suitable satisfaction to us, they shall then be deprived of their episcopates."[1]

[1] *Life of Gregory VII.* M. Abel François Villemain, 1874.

# Matilda, Countess of Tuscany

## CHAPTER VII

"When pain and anguish wring the brow
A ministering angel thou!
Forgot were hatred, wrongs and fears,
The plaintive voice alone she hears,
Sees but the dying man." *Marmion.*

GREGORY was correct in his anticipation of the reaction which would follow the hasty and ill-advised decision of the "Council" of Worms. Ere the sitting of the Synod had ended several of the Bishops repented of their rash act and sought from the Pontiff the forgiveness he was so anxious to bestow. Unwilling to deal harshly with the remainder who, perhaps, were afraid to avow their error, the Pope extended their time of grace which had expired in June. He also endeavoured to prepare the way for reconciliation with those already under the ban of the Church by letters to the Bishops requesting them to be lenient. In a letter addressed "To the Germans, Bishops, Dukes, and to all who defend the Christian Faith," Gregory thus continues:—"With respect to those who have been excommunicated I well recollect that I have given permission to you who defend the Christian Faith, as Bishops ought to do, to absolve them, and I still confirm the same, provided they readily repent and humbly do penance. Given at Laurente on the third day of the Nones of September 1076."[1]

While the Pontiff was by his clemency endeavouring to recall the rebellious German prelates to a sense of their duty, his friends in Tuscany were in sore distress. Matilda was indeed overwhelmed with sorrow at the rapid decline in health of her darling mother and closest companion. The sensitive

[1] Selection of the Letters of Hildebrand. Translated by G. Finch.

spirit of Beatrice had been crushed by the confirmation of the sentence against her nephew, and on her return from the council she fell into a decline, from the effects of which she gradually sank. "Her frail existence," records the faithful historian, "could not resist, and the sorrowful vision followed her to her last hour."

By easy stages Matilda caused the dear invalid to be conveyed to a sheltered valley lying between the plains of Lucca and Pisa, about three miles distant from the latter city, where were situated the Roman baths. It was a lovely spot amidst olive and chestnut trees, and Beatrice herself had hopes that the mildness of the climate and the medicinal waters of the springs would restore a little of her lost vitality.

Matilda included among her varied attainments the art of nursing which she practised almost daily among the sick poor. Now she scarcely ever quitted her mother's side, and by her ministrations and devotion did all that was possible to defer the inevitable hour of parting. The invigorating air at first seemed to revive the Princess. For a time she rallied, and Matilda was in hopes that Heaven had granted her petition for her mother's recovery. But Beatrice had been stricken too deeply, her gentle spirit sank beneath the blow, and her daughter realised with a pang of agony that she would ere long be left to tread the path of life alone.

While thus engrossed by her sad duties Matilda received information that her husband, who was at the time "meditating a project against the Pope," had been severely wounded and lay at the point of death. Godfrey, who inherited the courage and self-will of his race, was, in spite of his physical deformity, of an ambitious and war-like nature. His strength of will and diplomatic skill—a rare art in those days of rapid action—made him a useful ally to the German Court. He took public interest in Imperial affairs and was constantly embroiled with those who were on the side of the Church. It was a sorrow to Matilda that he was for ever making fresh plots against the Pontiff, and it was only by her reiterated

prayers on his behalf that he had not shared in the excommunication of the more culpable Henry. After being involved in numberless disputes Godfrey was attacked in Antwerp one night by a follower of Count Robert of Flanders. The assassin fled, leaving his knife in the wound which his unerring hand had inflicted, and to which his victim ultimately succumbed. The unfortunate Duke, in an unconscious condition, was conveyed with all possible speed to his palace, and messages were sent to apprise his wife of the accident.

Matilda's heart was torn between the conflicting calls of filial and conjugal duties, and if she had yielded to her affections she would have remained with her mother. After a short but decisive conflict with her inclinations she deemed that Godfrey was in most need of her presence, for he was without the religious consolations which solaced the dying Countess, and which robbed death of its terrors. Nor was he, like Beatrice, surrounded by loving friends who would minister to his wants and anticipate his wishes. His scheming nature, which commanded for him the admiration of his countrymen, had not, as Matilda was aware, won their affection, and it was the thought of his loneliness in suffering which decided her to go to his assistance.

No period, perhaps, of the history of the Great Countess throws out in bolder relief the innate tenderness and heroism of her character than does this spontaneous response to the claims of pity. It was a test of courage which she stood without shrinking, although it involved the sacrifice of what she held most dear. To such a devoted daughter as Matilda it must have been exquisitely painful to leave a mother whose life was slowly ebbing away, and whose few remaining hours of companionship were so unutterably precious; exquisitely painful to lose, even for a few minutes, the music of that loving voice whose accents she might never hear again, and to miss the smiles of affection which would soon be but a memory. It required an effort of will also to quit the home where she was safe under the sheltering wings of maternal

love to undertake an unknown journey—a journey which was not only long and irksome, but which was attended with inconceivable discomfort and fraught with peril at every step.

To venture all this for one she loved and who returned her esteem would be brave, but to do it for a husband who disliked her, and who was a bitter opponent of the cause she considered sacred, was heroic. Such self-abnegation demanded a generosity of which few souls would have been capable, and the extent of which Godfrey was never aware.

Matilda's movements were invariably distinguished by a promptitude which marked her sound logic and the energy of her character. Having therefore made up her mind as to the right course to pursue there was no hesitation, and her preparations were few and simple. In those days when people travelled for the most part on horseback there were few opportunities afforded for the transit of much female adornment, nor did the Countess, as the historian quaintly remarks, "need those aids to beauty which are now considered indispensable." An escort fully armed and prepared for any emergency was the principal requisite, and Matilda had always a body of trusty knights at her command.

With throbbing heart she tore herself from her mother's embraces, and knelt at her side to receive her blessing. Strengthened by the words of affection and encouragement which fell from the quivering lips of the dying Princess, the Great Countess, truly and nobly "Great," hastened to console her husband's last hours.

It is hardly possible in these days of rapid travelling, with all the modern additions to comfort and even luxury, to conceive the seriousness of Matilda's journey. In order to estimate the magnitude of the undertaking it is necessary to bring into consideration a few of the many obstacles she had to encounter in the course of her travels. Among the least of her difficulties may be enumerated the rough and uneven condition of the unmade roads, which rendered skill in horsemanship a necessity for safe transit. "Here, fallen rocks,

there, descending torrents impeded her path; now a river, deep, broad and rapid, must be crossed by a frail plank quivering and rebounding under the trembling foot." Streams which could be forded at certain times of the year were at others so swollen by floods that the horses were obliged to swim across the swift and dangerous currents. Bridges were few and placed at rare intervals, and not infrequently the travellers, after losing much time in making a detour to reach them, were almost afraid to trust themselves upon the decayed timbers upon which they rested. Sometimes even stone-arched structures were found to be entirely broken by the force of the mountain torrents of melted snow which, hurling themselves against the supports, carried them far down the river.

Such were the difficulties of travelling in the Middle Ages—difficulties which historians of our day depict with such vivid reality, and which the Tuscan Princess braved in order to be with her husband in his hour of suffering. In addition to all these hindrances, Matilda's party had to face the cold and perils of the precipitous mountain-passes, where one false step would send them to an instant and terrible death.

Even were these dangers safely averted there awaited them others scarcely less frightful. They had yet to fear the chance of falling into the hands of fierce and cruel bandits who lay hidden in the uncleared forests, and who were more to be dreaded than the wild animals who had their lairs within the dense woods. Above all there remained the dread of falling into the hands of Henry's emissaries who were well aware of the rich reward they would gain by delivering the Tuscan Princess into his power.

Fortunately Matilda escaped these and other dangers, and to the astonishment of the Duke's attendants, who had no intimation of her arrival in Germany, she presented herself at the door of her husband's palace.

She found Godfrey still alive, though suffering great pain from his wound, and so thoroughly prostrated from loss

of blood, that it was impossible for him to live many days.

Before leaving Italy Matilda wrote to apprise the Pontiff of her husband's mishap, and to beg the Apostolic forgiveness for him should he repent of the schemes in which he had been engaged against the Holy See. With the magnanimity of a generous soul, which harbours no feeling of resentment against a fallen foe, Gregory despatched special messengers, who arrived at the ducal palace soon after Matilda, bearing not only assurances of a free and full pardon, but also his Pontifical blessing.

It was evident that his wife's unexpected visit was a source of much gratification to the dying Duke. Her skilful nursing relieved him of many hours of pain, while her assurances of her sympathy soothed and tranquillised his perturbed spirit. When he heard of Beatrice's illness, and realised to some extent what it must have cost Matilda to leave her at such a time, there awoke within him an intense affection for his noble wife. As she tended him with undemonstrative solicitude he followed her graceful movements with looks that were mournfully pathetic in their mute expression of love and regret.

While she wiped the death-dews from her husband's damp brow her thoughts were turned almost in agony to the home wherein her mother lay "sick unto death" so far away from her reach. She pictured her on her bed of suffering praying Heaven to spare her until her child's return.

Matilda's unselfish nature found an ample reward for her unflinching adherence to duty in the softening influence which her coming had upon Godfrey who, touched by her unalloyed piety, turned his thoughts towards the Church of whom he had been so wilful a son. He lingered for a few days after his wife's arrival, when it became evident that his end was fast approaching. Then it was that Matilda, like an angel of mercy, fulfilled her mission, and by her consolations and prayers prepared him for his path through the valley of

death. Whispering in his ear, soon to close to sounds of earth, words of courage, of hope and of comfort, she held before his glazing eyes the emblem of forgiveness and salvation. A holy calm stole over his features, and with a look of unutterable love and gratitude towards his wife he expired.

The Pontiff heard of Godfrey's repentance with feelings of thanksgiving and gave orders that the prayers of the Church should be offered up for the soul of her erring child. He also sent a letter addressed to the German Bishops in which he writes as follows: "As to Gottfried we wish to remind you how unworthy we all are, and that we will often recall his memory before God. We have forgotten his hate and our resentment."

Godfrey was buried at Verdun beside his father with all the solemn rites with which the Church consigns her children to the tomb. As soon as the obsequies were over the widowed Countess started on her homeward journey to Pisa, with all possible speed. Ordinarily composed and deliberate in her movements, she was now almost beside herself with excitement. She became nervous and agitated, and consumed by a feverish impatience to behold her dear mother once again. The funeral service at which she had so lately assisted brought home to her with startling reality the inevitable parting which would deprive her of her loved one. What Matilda endured from anxiety lest she should after all be too late to receive a last look or smile passes beyond all description and was never effaced from her memory.

She rode on horseback in advance of her followers and, "touched by her grief, her piety and her courage, the people, who knelt down as she passed, already styled her 'The Great Countess.'"[1]

Matilda pressed on with all possible speed, expecting at every turn to be confronted with Henry, or to meet with detachments of the German army, bent on intercepting her passage. It was strange that he did not take this present

[1] M. Abel François Villemain.

opportunity of securing the person of his cousin. Either, which is hardly possible, he had not heard of her arrival in Germany, or the quickness of her movements frustrated his design of arresting her.

After chafing at the numerous hindrances and vexatious delays which met her at almost every step of the way, she found herself at last in her own sunny land. Her long and hazardous journey was ended, and the weary traveller, with a sigh of relief, was once more clasped in her mother's embraces.

At the time of her arrival, and almost meeting her at the threshold, came the envoy of the Holy Father sent in haste from Rome, bearing the Pontifical benediction to his valued and well-tried friend.

Once again, and for the last time in this world, Beatrice and Matilda received the Body of their dear Lord together. The dying Princess, with illumined features which reflected the happiness within, slowly murmured the responses at the conclusion of the consoling prayers by which the Church commends her children to God. "She had need of being fortified," laments the faithful Donizo, "for it was at the beginning of the crisis of which she perceived the results that she had quitted this world." With the foresight which the presence of death rendered prophetic, "she saw her child alone in the world. With her dying breath she commended her to the holy guardianship of the Pope, and committed Rome to the courage of her daughter. She passed saintly from the world. May her soul be in Paradise." "Resigned and tranquil and serenely happy in the presence of the Crucifix, and full of faith, hope and love," she fell asleep, her last lingering gaze resting on the bowed form of her darling daughter.

Thus went forth the Christian spirit of the gentle Beatrice, leaving a name like sweet perfume behind her, and a void in her child's heart that no human sympathy could ever fill. The newly widowed Countess kissed for the last time the irresponsive lips, which seemed even then to smile in blessing

upon her, and took her farewell of the beloved features she would see no more on earth.

The body of Beatrice was, according to her wish, laid to rest in the Cathedral at Pisa with all the solemn ceremonial of the Church. As the wailing notes of the Penitential Psalms rose and fell upon the ears of the mourners, Matilda's courage was scarcely equal to bear the sense of loss which threatened to overwhelm her. It was only by a supreme effort of will that she was able to restrain her pent-up emotions.

The remains of Beatrice were followed to the grave by the poet-chaplain, whose grief at the loss of his friend was much augmented by the fact that she was not buried within the walls of the family castle.

"A profound melancholy consumes me," writes Donizo, "to see an unworthy town possess the body of my mistress."

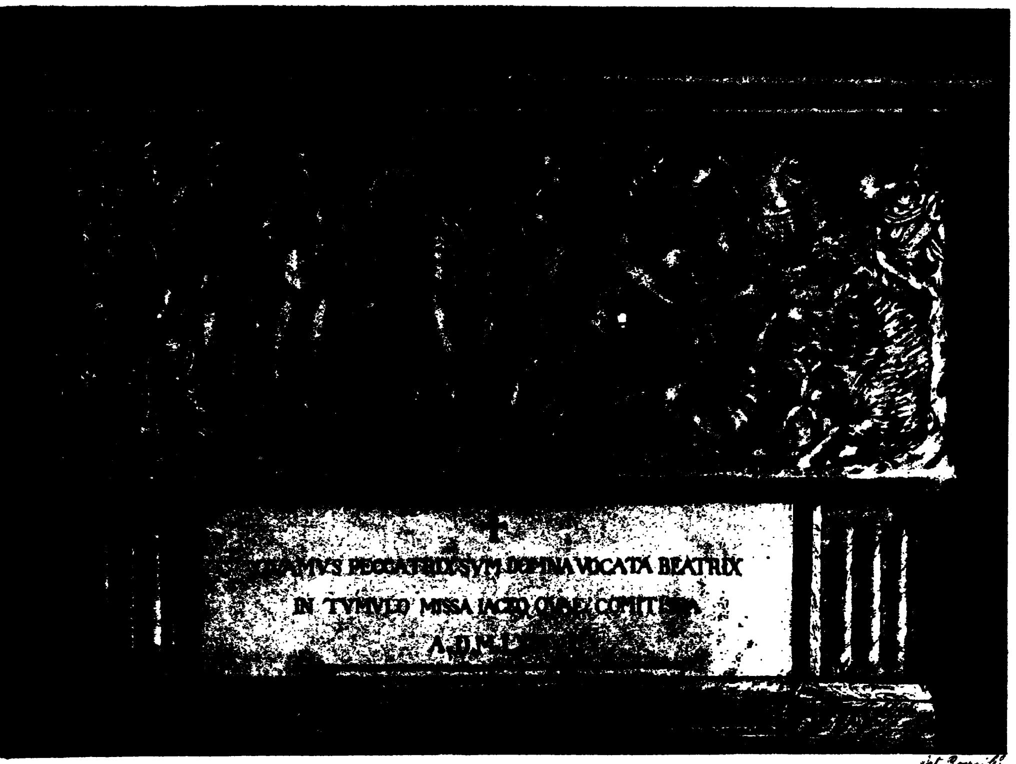
"Canossa is pure from all stain, and a noble place of sepulture."

"It is not good," he quaintly remarks, "to seek eternal repose in an impious town where sins are committed daily."

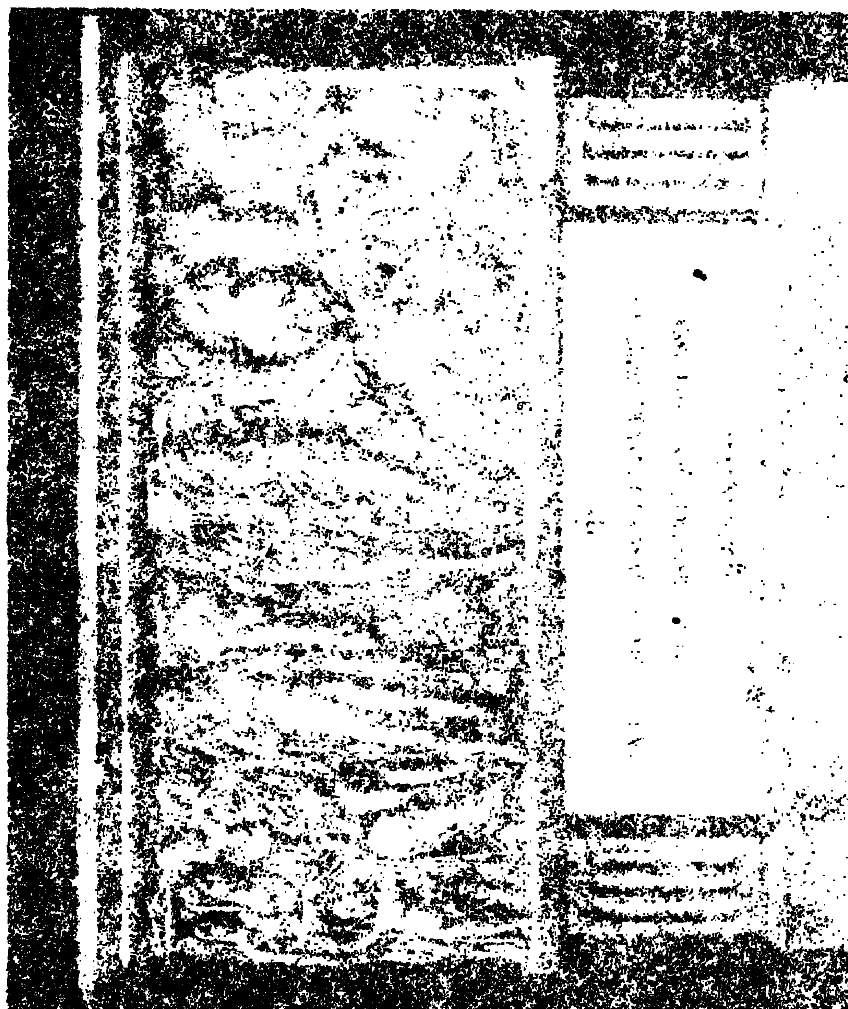
"The greater number of my masters ordained that, at their death, they should be buried on the ramparts of Canossa."

With the unselfishness which was the very essence of Beatrice's nature she had placed no obstacle in the way of her daughter's journey to console the dying Godfrey. But every moment that passed during the protracted absence of the child, from whom she was shortly to be separated forever in this life, was a sore trial to her maternal heart. In order to while away the tedious hours of expectancy she took a melancholy interest in composing her own epitaph, of which the following is a free translation:—

"Though a sinner
I was once called the Lady Beatrice,
And now I, once a Countess,
Lie beneath this tomb.
Whoever thou art say three paternosters for my soul."




Tomb of Beatrice.



This inscription Matilda, in accordance with her mother's expressed wish, placed above the grave. "With the inconsistency of the times," remarks a modern historian, "which allowed so strange a blending of pagan and Christian sepulture," the body of Beatrice was placed in an ancient sarcophagus on which was sculptured in relief the story of Phædra and Hippolytus.

It was the study of this tomb, composed of Parian marble "and one of the finest in point of workmanship," that interested Niccolo Pisano, the contemporary of Cimabue; this exquisite specimen of Italian skill "was the model from whence he derived the perfection of his chisel." It is said to have induced him to revert to the ancient form of sculpture, and from it he is supposed to have copied several figures for his famous pulpit in the Baptistery at Pisa.

The sarcophagus was afterwards removed to the Campo Santo, or burial-ground, where, as its name indicates, the dead are buried in sacred earth which was brought from Mount Calvary.[1] The mausoleum, which is on the north side, is considered to be "one of the most splendid and classically-beautiful sarcophagi in the Campo Santo at Pisa, that matchless structure unique amid the wonders of Italian art."

Hither in 1810, more than seven hundred and thirty years after the death of Beatrice, the remains of the Countess were conveyed, and upon her tomb was placed the following inscription :—

"Quamvis peccatrix sum Domna vocata Beatrix
In tumulo missa jaceo quæ comitissa
A.D. MLXXVI."

To Matilda the loss of her mother was irreparable, and her

[1] This famous cemetery in Pisa, "consecrated to the memory of those who have deserved well of their country, has," continues the chronicler, "given its name to every burial-ground in Italy. It dates from the end of the twelfth century, having been consecrated by Archbishop Ubaldo, who, when driven from Palestine by Saladin, loaded his fifty-three vessels with earth of the Holy Land and deposited it in the place now called Campo Santo."

intense depth of affection caused her to feel the separation more acutely than would a person of less susceptibility. They had been so essentially united in their aims and interests, their cares, sorrows and joys were the same, and a harmony of purpose had marked every action of their daily life.

Gregory always addressed his lengthy and precious letters to mother and child dually, and upon their influence he built his hopes of reconciliation with Henry. "I wish that you knew," he wrote to the Empress, "that we have worked for the cause of the Blessed Apostle, as always Beatrice and Matilda her daughter have taken part night and day in our labours."

In a letter to the Princesses he says, "We desire to have an interview with you, for your counsels are the counsels of well-beloved sisters." The Pontiff in another epistle declares: "We detest nothing so much as exaggeration and vain praises, but it is in truth we lean with much more confidence upon your noble devotion than upon the promises and support of all the monarchs of the world. That confidence with which your words, your actions, your zeal, piety, loyalty and faith inspire us." "The least doubt upon them," writes Gregory, at a later date of the Tuscan Princesses, "will be an injustice, for both regard God and the interests of His Church, and have shown towards us a fidelity at all costs."

It appeared as if the death of the only relative who entertained or expressed any affection for the King swept away the last barrier of restraint, and from henceforth he rushed headlong upon the course which was ultimately to prove his ruin. Ever since the issue of the excommunication he had maintained a bitter personal dislike to Gregory, and sought by every means in his power to counteract this influence. The Bishops and clergy who were conspicuous for their adherence to the Pontiff were imprisoned or exiled; their Sees and benefices remained unfilled, the revenues being applied to Henry's privy purse. The lives of superiors of monastic institutions were, according to historians, embittered and harassed by the constant exactions which were made

upon their resources to supply the exchequer. When, as it happened at times their funds became too exhausted to meet the King's demands, the priors were forced to resign their offices to more pliant successors, or the building was closed and the monks turned adrift.

Nor were Henry's lay subjects in any better condition, in spite of his promises to the contrary. The resolutions he had made at Goslar were forgotten as a dream, and the situation of the Saxons was deplorable in the extreme. "He confiscated their estates, exiled their nobles, sold the peasants as slaves, or compelled them to labour in erecting fortresses from which his mercenary troops might curb and ravish the surrounding country. The cry of the oppressed rose on every side from the unhappy land."[1]

The chiefs appealed to the Pontiff in letters full and frequent, and the heart of Gregory, though beating in sympathy with them, was yet yearning with fatherly solicitude for the author of all their woes. He still clung to the hope that the prodigal might avow and retrieve his errors and be restored to the communion of the Church. By this means only the Pontiff was assured would the sad state of affairs be remedied. Trusting therefore to fond anticipations of happier days—anticipations in which no one else shared—he resolutely set his face against any movement on the part of the people which would imperil the crown.

The Saxons, however, were not so sanguine; their experience of the monarch's duplicity was too deep and recent to allow them to entertain hopes that anything would materially affect his conduct or cause a softening of his savage nature.

Aided by the Dukes of Bavaria and Suabia, the princes resolved to assert their independence and make a stand for their liberties. They drove the German officers into the fortresses and released them only on condition that they took an oath never to carry arms against the Saxons. Emboldened by this victory and by the opportune escape of several of

[1] Right Hon. Sir James Stephen.

their chiefs from the imprisonment to which Henry had consigned them, they convened a meeting at Tribur on the left bank of the Rhine.

Henry, alarmed at the turn events were taking, entrenched himself in the Castle of Oppenheim, on the other side of the river. From thence he daily sent embassies to the princes, notably to Rudolph, Duke of Suabia, who was doubly his brother-in-law, he having married first the sister of the King and afterwards the sister of Bertha.

The humbled monarch was ready to promise anything, on oath if need be, and to furnish as many hostages as the Saxons required. But, as they had sadly experienced, "there was no pledge to which they could bind him who had so often promised before God to amend his ways, and who, as soon as the danger was passed, had broken through all his promises like cobwebs."

The Diet was held on 28th October, 1076, at which it was decided to convene a General Assembly at some later date. To this meeting, which was to be held at Augsburg in Bavaria, all the princes of the empire were summoned. Henry himself was invited to be present, since it was of the utmost importance that some arrangement should be made before the expiration of his term of excommunication.

Although it yet wanted several months to the date, the King could, as he was fully aware, at any time receive absolution if he showed desire to be freed from the sentence.

To Gregory, who was torturing his brain to devise a means by which Henry could be brought to see the danger of his false position, the proposed meeting seemed full of hope. The Pontiff therefore announced his intention of presiding in person, and after hearing Henry's reply to his accusers, to pronounce a final judgment. This plan of reconciliation spiritually and politically would, he considered, not only relieve Henry from the ban of the Church, but even bring him to the highest point of his ambition, that of being elected and crowned as Emperor.

With mingled feelings of hesitation and resolve, Henry reviewed his position, in which any further rash movement on his part would bias his people in favour of Rudolph and furnish them with excuse for rebellion. Immediate reconciliation with his nobles, whose allegiance was already weakened, was imperative, if he would save his sceptre from the grasp of his rival.

Although he did not refuse to recognise the authority of the Diet, some flickering gleam of ancestral pride still remained in the bosom of the King. Something of the spirit of Charlemagne revived in his unworthy descendant, and made him shrink from appearing before his suzerains in the character of a criminal.

There were other reasons which made Henry unwilling to face the ordeal of meeting his accusers in open court. His mind, gloomy and ill at ease, anticipated the overwhelming evidence which would be brought forward by witnesses whose probity could not be disputed. He entertained no doubt but that the verdict, however much the Pontiff might palliate its severity, would be against him. Not that he attached much importance to a decision of the Church, which had pronounced his excommunication, but he dreaded the effect which an adverse judgment passed upon him in the presence of his subjects would have upon their loyalty. The disastrous consequences of his folly and pride stared him in the face, and too late he realised that the hatred and distrust he had inspired might be the means of hurling him from the throne.

On the other hand, by failing to attend the Council, he would appear to acknowledge his guilt and also give fresh cause of offence to the Pontiff. This he could not afford to do, since if he did not obtain pardon ere the end of the time of his probation, all chance of wielding the sceptre of Charlemagne would be gone, and his already tottering kingdom be lost to him for ever. "If the sun," remarks the historian, "should go down on the 23rd February 1077, and he

were not forgiven, his crown was to be transferred to another."

For nearly two months Henry remained in isolation in his palace at Spires "where he entered no church and transacted no public business." Deprived of all the pleasures and amusements by which he was accustomed to while away the tedious hours, he became morose and miserable.

Bertha in vain sought to cheer the desponding monarch, by drawing his attention to the charms of his little son. He made no attempt to conceal the dislike he felt for his unhappy spouse, and refusing all her efforts to console him, "yielded himself a prey to melancholy."

In his dilemma he wrote to his cousin Matilda, to entreat her intercession in obtaining from the Holy Father indulgence and pardon.[1]

After evolving in his mind some way of escape from the difficulties which were the more serious because they were of his own creation, he had recourse to a scheme as cowardly as it was hypocritical. "To gain the empire, he was now ready to become as humble as he had before been arrogant." Though active submission was still far from being Henry's intention, he resolved, for the furtherance of his ambitious plans, to seek a personal interview with Gregory. He prepared to throw himself at the feet of the man he hated, and to wring from his sympathies that forgiveness "which after hearing the evidence of a council of accusers he would be unable to grant."

It has been remarked by a Protestant writer that to a great and virtuous soul there is nothing humiliating in confessing an error. Had Henry therefore been in earnest in his repentance, what a vista of future greatness lay open before him. Young, handsome and, when he chose, winning in speech and engaging in manners, it would be an easy matter to make himself popular with his subjects. Secure in their love and strengthened on his imperial throne by the

[1] "*Ad consobrinam Mathildem misit,*" etc. Donizo.

far-reaching voice of the Church, he might have commanded the respect of the world. But, alas! his repentance was merely assumed as a cloak to cover his real designs upon the person and authority of Gregory.

Henry could not very well have chosen a worse time for his enterprise, for the winter of that year was unexampled for its severity. The Rhine remained chained by the icy hand of frost from the beginning of November to the first of April, and the heavy and repeated falls of snow rendered the crossing of the mountains which formed Italy's barrier almost impracticable.

On hearing of her husband's project, Bertha made her request—the first, indeed, to which he had ever listened—to go with him. She begged to share his dangers and his mortifications, and to be near him with their child, the little Conrad, in his hour of trial. Touched by such evidence of love, the depth of which his selfish nature could not fathom, Henry accepted her offer. Not, indeed, in the spirit in which the proposal was made, but as a possible means of securing an audience with the Pontiff from whom he was even now meditating means of wresting the throne. It was like a punishment for Henry's duplicity that the very infant whose life he was about to expose should, when arrived at man's estate, rebel against so unnatural a father.

As the Queen knelt beside her sleeping infant on the eve of the departure for Italy, she almost regretted that she had suggested taking him on that perilous journey. The snow-capped mountains of her native land loomed before her mental vision with terrible distinctness, and her heart sank at the prospect of exposing her child to what seemed certain death. Yearning as she did for the sympathy which was denied her on earth, her thoughts naturally turned to the unfailing source of all consolation. With tears falling fast upon the babe's unconscious form, she begged Heaven to protect his precious little life, and prayed that his guardian angel "would have charge concerning him."

Her motherly solicitude seemed to draw her nearer that holy relationship which God Himself has rendered sacred. She pictured that gentle Mother who had pressed against her loving breast the Saviour of the world, and whose encircling arms had sheltered Him from the cold snows which lay upon His city of Bethlehem. Her terrors vanished, and she rose from her knees fortified to bear with patience whatever trials of strength and courage lay before her.

The King quitted Spires a few days before the commencement of Christmas, at a time when hope and love visit the children of earth, and when the hearts of men are invited to be tender and generous. On the day that he left the city the inhabitants, among whom the news quickly spread, came to the doors and windows of their houses to witness his departure. Respect for their Queen, whose unobtrusive piety and renowned purity of life had endeared her to all classes, alone prevented them from collecting in the streets or from making any public demonstration. They could not help feeling pity also for their handsome young King who, with lowered head and downcast mien, was thus stealing away from the empire whose crown he might have graced. Bertha was so engrossed in watching the sullen visage of her lord, whom she longed to console, that she had no thought for her people. Had she remarked the evidences of love which thus showed themselves in that silent sympathy, her sad lot would have been cheered by a ray of comfort in her hour of sorrow.

In order to be sure of eluding the vigilance of his enemies, Henry was forced to make a circuitous route through Burgundy, intending to cross the Alps by the Jura instead of following the more direct way.

On arriving at Vevey, on the Lake of Geneva, he was met by Adelaide, the mother-in-law alike of Rudolph and of Henry, whose harsh treatment of her daughter led her to regard him with loathing and dislike. At first she refused to grant him a passage through her territory, but the sight

of the faithful wife, with her infant clasped to her breast awoke her own motherly feelings, and she yielded to the request. But Bertha's brother was not so forgiving, and, considering Henry as an enemy to his house, was not disposed to let him pass without payment. Not until he had ceded five Burgundian bishoprics, the revenues of which he had for years appropriated to his own use, did the impatient Henry, chafing at the unexpected delay, obtain the required permission to cross the frontier.

Adelaide, who viewed with grief and anger the deplorable condition to which her daughter was reduced, resolved to share the mountainous journey in order to be at her side in the hour of danger. By her presence and maternal care she could sustain the fainting Queen and inspire her with hope and courage in the awful scenes through which she was about to pass.

From Vevey the travellers, taking the road of St Maurice, crossed the Rhone at Martigny and were soon at the foot of the Alps. "The fearful journey from St Maurice to St Bernard, a distance of nearly forty miles, was safely accomplished by the royal party," who followed the same passage of the St Bernard which was made in 755 by an ancestor of the King, who crossed with an army of 30,000 men. "This route afterwards became much more frequented from increased intercourse with the papal court. Persons of all sexes and conditions from the north of Europe used it to cross the Alps, which were of so frightful a height that the attempt was always attended with risk, even in the summer. It was now the very heart of one of the most rigorous and lengthened winters recorded in history; the narrow precipitous shelving paths cut here and there in the rocks and mountains of Switzerland were so obstructed by snow each day accumulating, that the very face of Nature was changed everywhere, and it had become perilous to travel even short distances. . . . A funeral pall," continues the graphic historian, "was spread in dreary whiteness over each object as they

advanced into the solemn defile of St Maurice, that most magnificent of Nature's portals! Fit entrance to the wild kingdom of the Alps, whose savage grandeur it unlocks to the startled sight. . . . The roaring torrent—the murmur of the silver cascade—the cheerful sounds of life in man—in bird—in beast—all were stilled; the silence of death reigned around them."[1]

Although historians may differ in their opinion of the causes or motives which took Henry to Canossa, they are all agreed in their descriptions of the horrors which attended his hapless expedition. Writers vie with each other in recounting the thrilling scenes and hairbreadth escapes of the German King during this long and toilsome passage to Italy. "Again and again were this miserable party in danger of being buried in the snow; again and again had they to toil up precipices as slippery as glass, where one false step would have plunged them into a yawning abyss. Sometimes a solid wall of ice rose up before them and the guides with their hatchets cut steps for their feet. When the men had reached the summit the Queen and her child were tied up in hides and dragged up to the top with ropes and let down in a similar manner over the other side. Some of the attendants lost their lives in this dreadful route and others lost their limbs from excessive cold."[2] "And now," to use the words of the former historian, "nearly 9000 feet above the level of the sea—suspended between heaven and earth, exposed to the outrageous blasts of winter, where no breathing thing but man can permanently exist—where the frozen ground refuses to shelter the dead—where no sounds break the silence of this living grave but the awful voice of thunder, the howling of the winds and the crash of falling avalanches leaping from precipice to precipice, they had to front the horrors and dangers of the descent, tenfold greater than those they had hitherto surmounted."

[1] *Historical Pictures of the Middle Ages.* 1854.
[2] Lecture on "Hildebrand and His Days." N. M'Michael, D.D. 1853.

The arduous task was at length accomplished, and more dead than alive the party commenced the descent into the valley of Aosta. The green slopes were gladly hailed as a grateful change from the precipitous and glacial mountain passes through which they had lately come. "It is impossible to conceive," says Sir James Stephen, "the sufferings which the travellers, especially the women and child, endured during their transit over the mountains. The wonder is that they ever survived the horrors of an expedition so terrible and so useless." Alas, that so much suffering and exposure to peril should end in failure, and that such heroic exertions should have no better result than a bitter, haunting memory of defeat and shame. It could not be otherwise, since the journey was undertaken in no true spirit of atonement, but was all part of a sham contrition assumed by a hypocritical King to gain his own ends.

It is difficult to conceive why Henry should thus have risked his own life and that of his heir, instead of sending an envoy, since his submission was only imaginary. Certain it is that had the Pontiff undertaken the journey to Augsburg, as he intended, his life would have been forfeited by the exposure to severe cold.

Matilda, who was aware from personal experience of the discomforts and dangers of the route, realised the risk entailed to Gregory did he attempt the passage at such an inclement season. She did her utmost, but without avail, to dissuade him from the step. With graphic pen she placed before him the difficulties and perils of travelling across the mountains at his age and in such terrible weather.

The Pontiff, however, was bent upon proceeding on his mission of peace and reconciliation. A lofty resolution nerved his apostolic soul and rendered him oblivious to all consideration of self. In vain the Cardinals, with tearful entreaties, implored him not to quit Rome. In vain did they point out to him the loss the Church would sustain at such a crisis of her history by the death of so capable a sovereign.

He remained deaf alike to arguments, prayers, and appeals. His dauntless nature triumphed over the fears of his friends and overruled all their objections. He reminded them that the more inclement the season the more need there was to lose no time in setting out. The anniversary of the excommunication was drawing very near, and the Pontiff had no wish that by any delay on his part the King should forfeit his crown. He deemed no sacrifice of comfort or health or even of life itself too great if, by the journey to Germany, he could bring peace to the distracted country, torn alike by temporal and spiritual dissensions.

Before leaving the city Gregory addressed a letter to the German princes, informing them of his approaching visit, and concluding as follows:—"I, Pontiff, Servant of the Prince of the Apostles, in opposition to the advice of the Romans, come unto you, trusting in the mercy of God and your own catholicity, ready to suffer death for the glory of God and your salvation, for our consolation is through much tribulation to arrive at and to reach the Kingdom of Heaven."

At the end of December the Pope, escorted by a number of knights and a retinue of men-at-arms furnished by Matilda, started on his mission of pacification.

At Florence he was joined by the Countess who, finding him determined on his journey, "attended the papal progress" and took personal command of the cavalcade. Animated with a burning desire to reconcile the King with the Church and his people, and buoyant with belief in the success of his intervention, Gregory was unconscious of fatigue, although he had already traversed nearly two hundred miles. He was as ready at sixty-four to face the Alpine passes as he had been thirty years ago, when he followed his patron and namesake into exile. "You know," said he, "how that, yielding to force, I crossed the mountains with my Lord, Pope Gregory." But when nearing Mantua fatigue had begun to tell upon the weakened frame of the Pontiff and, overcome by cold, he decided to rest on his arrival at Vercelli.

He had scarcely reached that Piedmontese city, and Matilda "was even now pointing out to her guards their line of march through the snowy peaks which closed in her northern horizon," when tidings reached them of the rapid approach of Henry.

The wary Countess, who had from the commencement of the journey kept strict watch upon the personal safety of Gregory, now redoubled her vigilance. She distrusted her cousin's motives in coming thither at such a time, the object of which she feared was an attack upon the person of the Pontiff. With the precaution of an experienced warrior, she sent messengers in all directions to report upon the movements of the King, and to gather from them somewhat of his intention. These returned with the startling information that the whole of Lombardy was much excited by Henry's presence, and that numbers of clergy and nobles who had incurred the displeasure of the Church were flocking to his standard.

Matilda begged the Pontiff not to continue the journey, which the King's coming had rendered unnecessary and dangerous. She advised him, for prudence sake, to retire to her castle at Canossa, which "had proved so often a rampart against German encroachments." The fortress was, as she was aware, strong enough to resist any force that the King, if he were on the offensive, might bring before its walls, since being near the northern frontier of her possessions, it was ever kept in readiness to withstand assault. If, on the other hand, Henry's intentions were peaceful, it would be easy for Gregory to retrace the short distance between Canossa and Vercelli.

The Pontiff, more to relieve the fears of the Princess than for any doubt of his own safety, consented to her proposal and retired to the castle. Here he found among the many friends assembled to meet him Hugo of Cluny, who had come to confer on matters relating to his monastery.

Hugo still remained the same "humble, modest and mortified" monk as when Gregory sat at his feet and drank

in his words of wisdom and of piety. The promotion which had come to others, remarks his biographer, passed him by unnoticed and he remained simply Abbot of Cluny until his death. This happened in 1109, when the venerable saint, having survived his pupil Pontiff and two of his successors in the Chair of St Peter, passed to his reward at the ripe age of 86.[1]

With that overflowing spirit of charity for which he was remarkable, Hugo yearned over the prodigal whom he had held as an infant in his arms. During his conversation with Gregory he used all the arguments in his power to induce him to receive the monarch who had come so far and in such humble guise to make amends as the monk charitably believed for his former faults. Gregory, whose repeated entreaties for an interview had hitherto been met on Henry's side with sullen silence, was not, as may be supposed, anxious now to give him a hearing. In answer to the enquiries of the Countess, he had intimated that he would prefer the meeting to take place in Germany as arranged.

Once assured of the Pontiff's safety, Matilda had no fears for her own, and she went forth, accompanied by the Abbot as far as Reggio, to meet the royal party, reports of whose progress and hostility had been so alarming.

[1] William the Conqueror had such a high opinion of Hugo's sanctity, that he wrote, offering a hundred pounds for every monk he would send from Cluny to England. But the Abbot, "in a letter which is still preserved," replied "he would give that sum himself for every good monk he could purchase for his monastery, if such a thing were to be purchased."

# Matilda as Comfortei

## CHAPTER VIII

"Go, sin no more! thy penance o'er
A new and better life begin!
God maketh thee for ever free
From the dominion of thy sin!
Go, sin no more! He will restore
The peace that filled thy heart before
And pardon thine iniquity."

*The Golden Legend*—LONGFELLOW.

To Henry, the unexpected meeting with his cousin and Abbot Hugo augured well for the success of his enterprise. He trusted by enlisting their sympathies with the Pope, to obtain an easy and amicable ending to what threatened to be a serious matter.

While the King unfolded his views to Hugo, the wearied Queen, with a sigh of relief, threw herself into the loving arms of Matilda, and with her child was folded against one of the truest and noblest hearts that ever beat in sympathy with human woe. With the grace and winning manner peculiar to her and which was irresistible, she attempted with womanly tact to make poor Bertha forget the horrors she had lately undergone, and by tender attention to her needs, lessened the sufferings the frightful expedition had entailed. The Princess, whose highest ambition it was to give solace to others, relieved the anxieties of her visitor, and with that buoyancy of mind which was one of her characteristics, drew pictures—which, alas! were never realised—of brighter days to come. Aware of the contumely with which Henry treated his wife, Matilda poured the oil of gladness into the wounds of the unloved Queen, by assuring her that her unswerving fidelity could not fail to obtain for

her a full reward in the affection which such devotion deserved.

With regard to the King's anticipations of a favourable ending to his journey, Matilda had her fears, and her heart bled for Bertha. She had undergone so much already in mind and body, in order that her husband might have the opportunity of pleading his cause, that the Countess dared not even hint of the possibility of the disappointment which she believed awaited her.

Henry was agreeably surprised and gratified at the affectionate reception of his wife by one held in high esteem by the Pontiff. Before leaving Spires, and again when nearing Canossa, he had written to his cousin "to beg her to act in his favour, and to obtain from the Holy Father indulgence and pardon." If he had felt any misgivings as to the results of his self-arranged plan, they no longer existed; and he awaited with the elasticity of hope the conference which he firmly believed would be considerably to his advantage. He had no doubt but that his overtures of reconciliation would be readily accepted, and immediately on his arrival at Reggio despatched messengers to Gregory, notifying him of his approach and pacific intentions. "The King," said the ambassadors, "does not mind being judged, he knows that the Pontiff will protect innocence and justice." But their mission resulted in failure, and the crestfallen knights returned, to the consternation of Henry, without having the seals of their credentials broken, with the message that Gregory steadily adhered to his resolution of meeting him at Augsburg.

Almost in despair at the refusal of the Pope to admit him to audience, he again sent envoys, but in a more submissive fashion, to remind Gregory that the anniversary of his excommunication was at hand. "If," continued the message, "the excommunication be not removed, the King, *according to the laws of the land*, will lose his right to the crown. The Prince humbly requests the Holy Father to raise the inter-

dict, and to restore him to the communion of the Church. He is ready to give every satisfaction that the Pope shall require, to present himself at such place and at such time as the Pope shall order, to meet his accusers, and to commit himself entirely to the decision of the Head of the Church."

To this apparently humble appeal Gregory sent no other reply than the repetition of his decision with regard to the meeting at Augsburg.

Henry, almost beside himself with wounded pride and mortification at the failure of the mission, turned for help to the friendly Hugo. "He conjured and wept" and Matilda added her prayers to those of the monarch that the Abbot should intercede for him. "I cannot, I cannot," helplessly repeated the sympathetic monk, who, grieving for the King's disappointment, suggested that the Countess herself should ask the Pontiff to grant an audience to the "repentant" King.

On hearing these words Henry's hopes revived; he bent his royal knee to his relative. "If you will come to my assistance, cousin, I will no longer struggle. I will not fight in the future. The Pope has treated me very badly, dear cousin, but do what you can. Get me absolved, I beg you. Go! my cousin, prevail on him to bless me. Go!"[1]

The Countess, convinced of the futility of the errand, hesitated to undertake the mission, and made no reply to Hugo or to the protestations of the King, which were too fulsome to be sincere. She fixed a look of infinite tenderness upon the bowed form of the Queen, from whom all hope and strength seemed to have fled. Poor Bertha, unnerved by the long journey and the uncertainty of its issue, abandoned herself to the grief she could no longer restrain. At the sight of her tears, Matilda's reluctance disappeared. As she regarded the worn looks of her friend, she could refuse no longer to undertake the office of mediator. It was evident that there was no other way of consoling the wife than by

[1] Amédée Renée.

entreating the clemency of the Church for the husband. Matilda dreaded what the consequences would be to that sorely-tried Queen, already prostrated by the weight of her husband's excommunication, should the ban not be removed. She knew that the Pontiff was unaware of all this, and she knew also that his pitying heart would not inflict such fearful sufferings upon any woman, far less upon an unoffending and pious daughter of the Church. Bertha's silent pleading decided Matilda's course of action and, embracing her fondly, the Tuscan Princess took her leave. She set out for Canossa, followed by the benediction, the hopes and the prayers of those who awaited the issue of her intervention.

The gates of the castle were flung open to admit the stately Countess, who passed without pause to the apartment of the Pontiff. Throwing herself on her knees before him, she recounted her fears for Bertha, and pleaded in such moving terms, that Gregory, unable to resist her appeal, though much against his will, consented to receive the King.

Mounted messengers were at once despatched to Reggio, and the royal travellers, with revived hopes, started on their way to Canossa.

Henry lost no time in presenting himself before the fortress which was to be the scene of a humiliation unexampled in history for its depth and insincerity. On the way he was joined by a considerable number of clerics and laymen from Lombardy, who had also incurred the censure of the Holy See. As avowed partizans of Germany, these delinquents hoped to profit by the King's appearance, and by making with him submission to the Church to reinstate themselves in the Pontiff's favour.

The castle was protected by three walled enclosures, and Henry's followers, who were for the most part unfriendly to Matilda, were not permitted by her guards to go beyond the first. The King, therefore, was obliged to leave them to await his coming in the outer court while he was admitted to the inner enclosure.

Arrived within the gates, the monarch in his assumed *rôle* of penitent, divested himself of the emblems pertaining to his high rank. "It was necessary," remarks the historian, "that the Emperor should place his crown on the earth, and that he despoil himself of the insignia of royalty before being admitted within the fortress." Nay, he went further in his abasement, he laid aside his ordinary dress, which he exchanged for a garb "of white woollen," and having assumed a posture beseeming a penitent, he was ready for his interview with the Pope. Henry entertained the idea that the Pontiff, overcome by his condescension and by the humility of his penance, would receive him immediately with open arms. He trusted to use the easily-won reconciliation as a powerful weapon by which to crush his enemies and secure for himself the imperial diadem. His exclusion from the precincts of the castle was the first check to the hopes upon which he had built his schemes of revenge, and for the first time he began to doubt the wisdom of his journey to Canossa.

In the meantime, Bertha, her mother and Abbot Hugo passed into the castle, where not even the presence of the only friends she possessed could calm the anxious spirit of the Queen. She was essentially a pious woman, and the separation of her husband from the communion of the Church was to her a source of deep affliction. Aware of his irascibility of temper, she feared lest, after all, he should in a fit of passion refuse to submit to the punishment, the fulfilment of which would prove his contrition.

The shades of night fell softly over the castle and its wakeful inmates and the pale moon looked down upon the figure of the King maintaining his lonely watch, his eyes fixed upon the window of the apartment within which the Pontiff also kept solitary vigil.

To a man of Henry's uncontrollable temper, the long-sustained tension upon his nerves was sufficient to unhinge his reason. Every hour he anticipated a summons or message from Gregory, and every hour he was doomed to disappoint-

ment. To his expectant ears every unwonted stir within the limits from which he was excluded heralded his release from his intolerable position. His hopes raised again and again by approaching footsteps were again and again dashed to the ground as the sounds retreated and died away in the distance behind the gates.

For three days did he remain in isolation, with no other companions than his own reflections. He refused food and fasted from morning till night, a severe restraint for one addicted as he was, according to the custom of the time, to the pleasures of the table.

Before the gateway which has perpetuated his shame by its inscription—*Portia di Penitenza*—he paced up and down barefooted on the stony courtyard with the majesty and somewhat of the ferocity of a caged lion. History tells us that whenever the shadow of the Pontiff passed the window, Henry knelt down, trusting that such abasement would touch Gregory's susceptible heart. The fierce looks of the angry monarch, however, belied his humble posture, for whatever feelings of repentance Henry had entertained had long since given place to burning rage and resentment at the unlooked-for delay.

The Pontiff, meanwhile, as he himself assures us, "spent the days and nights in prayer, entreating the Almighty to enlighten us from on high as to what to do in such a serious pass, and what to reserve for the decision of a Council." In a letter addressed to the Germans, he gives the following account of Henry's penance and explains the seeming cruelty in deferring the audience "whilst we long delayed with many consultations." "He came with few attendants where we were staying, and there miserably remaining before the gate for the space of three days barefooted, and clothed in woollen, all royal attire being laid aside, he did not cease to implore the aid of the apostolic compassion with many tears, until he moved us all who were present, and all whom the report of this reached, to such a great pity and merciful compassion,

that, interceding for him with many prayers and tears, all truly wondered at the harshness of our mind, and some indeed exclaimed that we had not the gravity of apostolic severity, but, as it were, the cruelty of tyrannical fierceness."

"We received from him," continued Gregory in writing of the interview, "the securities which are beneath written, whose confirmation also we received at the hands of the Abbot of Cluny, and of our daughter Matilda and the Countess Adelaide."[1]

Donizo, the family chaplain, who loved every stone of Canossa, endows the castle with personality and breaks out into the following song of triumph:—"I possess at once the Pope, the King, Matilda, princes of Italy, of France, and those from beyond the mountains. Those also of Rome, prelates, sages, venerables, and among them Hugo of Cluny."[2]

[1] Selections from the Letters of Hildebrand, Gregory VII. Translated by G. Finch.

[2] His Holiness, Leo XIII., a few months before his election to the pontifical throne, paid a visit to this famous fortress. "I have caught the contagion," said the Cardinal to two of his friends, "and I too will go with you to Canossa." "He would just join our party as one of us, and we were to make all the arrangements and settle all the details. He stipulated that we should call him by no other title than Don Gioachimo." This was in October 1877, eight hundred years after Henry's self-abasement. "At Quattro Castella, a little to the right, we came in sight of the first buildings forming an advance guard of the impregnable Castle of Canossa." "There are here," continues the narrator, "the ruins of four castles belonging to the Countess Matilda, and no doubt they were used partly for defence and partly as a depot for collecting supplies from the neighbouring fertile valleys, for at Canossa itself the precipitous crags could supply nothing in the way of food for either man or horse." . . . "Finally, we clambered up to the summit of the rock which is crowned by the scanty ivy-clad ruins of the once famous castle. Certainly there was little in the way of architecture or grandeur to reward our toilsome ascent. We could not trace in the faintest way the rooms in which the Countess Matilda had entertained her illustrious guest, Gregory VII. and the *elite* of the nobility of Tuscany, among whom was numbered the Count d'Este, the ancestor of the present Royal House of England. Scarcely a vestige was left of the inner or outer court, in which the manly form of Henry IV. trod the snow-strewn stones." *Canossa.* Edited by Right Rev. Monseigneur Gradwell, Domestic Prelate to His Holiness Leo XIII.

Donizo then describes, as an eye-witness, the events which took place at the memorable meeting between the Pontiff and Henry—a scene which has become historical.

On the third day the King was admitted to the interior of the castle. "Casting himself on the ground, with arms outstretched, he exclaimed, 'Pardon me, Father, pardon me!' At the sight of the humbled monarch Gregory was moved even to tears. Taking pity on him, he raised him from his lowly posture, saying, 'It is enough, it is enough.'"[1] "As a man, he could not repress a sentiment of pity for so great a change of fortune, and as a priest, touched by the return to the fold of a sinner." The conditions of treaty included a promise that, until the meeting at Augsburg took place, Henry "should keep no state, and take no part in public affairs; and that beyond the levying of royal taxes necessary for the subsistence of himself and his own family, he should exercise no regal acts of power."

These forms being gone through, the Pontiff released him from his excommunication, and led the way to the Chapel in order to celebrate Mass. After the consecration the Pope, still holding the Host in his hand, thus addressed the King. "We have received letters from you and those of your party, in which we are accused of having usurped the Holy See by simony, and of having both before and since our episcopacy, committed crimes which, according to the canons, excluded us from Holy Orders. Although we could justify ourselves by the testimony of those who have known our manner of life from childhood, and who were the authors of our promotion to the episcopacy, nevertheless to do away with all kinds of scandal, we will appeal to the judgment not of men but of God. Let the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we are about to take, be this day a proof of our innocence. We pray the Almighty to dispel all suspicion if we are

[1] "Parce beate pater pie parce mihe peto plane! Papa videns flentem miseratus ei 'satis est ist.'"—Donizo.

innocent, and to cause us suddenly to die if we are guilty Son, do also as you have seen us do. The German princes have daily accused you to us of a great number of crimes, for which those nobles maintain that you ought to be interdicted during your whole life, not only from royalty and all public functions, but also from all ecclesiastical communion and from all commerce of civil life. They urgently demand that you be judged, and you know how uncertain are all human judgments. Do then as we advise, and if you feel that you are innocent, deliver the Church from this scandal and yourself from this embarrassment. Take the other portion of the Host, that this proof of your innocence may close the lips of your enemies and engage us to be your most ardent defender to reconcile you with the nobles and for ever to terminate this cruel war."

The King, surprised by the suddenness and sacred nature of the test, which, had he been in earnest would have presented no difficulty, was unable to meet this appeal to his sincerity. "He was troubled, he hesitated, his visage became covered with perspiration." "That evasion before the Host," continues Donizo, "which the hand of the Pope extended to him, struck the people as if he had fallen dead on receiving It." Rising from his knees, he requested permission to consider his answer. Approaching his friends, who had been permitted to enter the castle chapel, he held a whispered consultation with them as to the best means by which to avoid the ordeal. Hardened offenders as most of his followers were, they had not entirely lost all sense of religious feeling, and all agreed that it would be impossible for him to commit such a flagrant act of sacrilege.

Returning to his place, the King made the following reply to the Pontiff, who awaited with prayerful anticipation a favourable result of the deliberation. "As those nobles who remain faithful are for the greater part absent, as well as my accusers, the latter would give but little faith to what I might do in my justification, unless it were done in their

presence. For that purpose I beg that the test may be postponed to the day of the sitting of the general Diet."

The Pope, whose keen eye pierced through the thin veil of Henry's hypocrisy, consented, and with a heart saddened by such evidence of insincerity, he turned round and, with a voice which trembled from disappointment and sorrow, he continued the Mass.

The Queen and her mother occupied seats near Matilda, and over them hung the pennon trophies won by the Tuscan Margraves, amongst them being the imperial flag, which the Countess herself had captured. From the hearts of the three women there went forth prayers that the King might be softened by the significance and beauty of the ritual, from which he had so long been estranged. When the Pontiff, with the Host in his hand, approached the altar rails before which Henry was kneeling, they rejoiced exceedingly. They believed that their petition had been granted, and that the King could not fail to respond to the Divine appeal. Bertha was nearly fainting from excess of joy! Already before her mind appeared the roseate picture of her husband reconciled to the Church, restored to the allegiance and love of his people, and of a purified court. She regarded the pain and perils through which she had passed for his sake as a trifling price to pay for the affection which she hoped would be her reward. Alas! she saw our Lord's gift of Himself refused, and the channel of grace closed to the unhappy King. She felt that she was once again the unloved wife of a monarch who seemed bent upon his own moral and material destruction.

When Mass was concluded, Gregory invited the royal guests to the feast which Matilda had inaugurated in honour of the reconciliation. Henry, relieved that the ceremony was over, and his mind set at rest by the removal of the interdict, resumed his regal attire and with it somewhat of his wonted arrogance. His appetite, sharpened by the long fast, was not affected by any uneasiness of mind, but did full justice to the

delicacies spread before him, and of which his wife and Matilda ate but sparingly. Gregory, according to the rule of perpetual abstinence which he strictly observed, partook of nothing but a small portion of vegetables, "esteeming wine and fruit as luxuries too great for his simple taste." The lessons he had learned from Abbot Hugo were not forgotten, and, like him, he considered "every gratification sinful which did not tend to the glory of God."

During the repast he repeatedly attempted to draw Henry into conversation, and with parental kindness invited his confidence. Nothing, however, could move the King, who maintained an obstinate reserve. After waiting in vain for some softening of his pride, some sign of repentance or regret, Gregory, with a sinking heart, dismissed with his blessing the man who was henceforth to be his bitterest foe.

It was useless to prolong the visit of the King while he remained in this intractable mood, and much as Bertha needed rest after her privations and exposure, she was obliged to set out for Germany immediately the meal was ended.

Henry was, as may well be supposed, anxious to quit a scene which held for him so much mortification of pride. He was not a little disquieted also, as to the effect his humiliation would have upon his subjects, and regretted that he had not dared to take the test which Gregory had offered, and which would have satisfied their religious scruples.

Long and sadly, and with what yearnings of spirit who can tell, did the Pontiff gaze upon the retreating form of the descendant of a noble race, and the grandson and son of pious parents. It grieved him to think that one so young in years could be so old in duplicity, and that by his insensate folly he should bring so much misfortune upon those who would have proved his truest friends.

Henry was endowed by nature and inheritance with a figure that was both tall and commanding, and his features would have been refined had not debauchery impressed upon them her unfailing traces. He, however, still retained that

kingly dignity which alone kept alive the dying embers of his people's loyalty—loyalty so sorely strained by his vices and tyranny.

On more than one occasion he had given instances of personal bravery, and he was possessed of intellectual powers of no mean order. With all these advantages, Henry was neither fortunate nor happy. The neglect of those qualities, which, if cultivated in early youth, would have made him the most powerful sovereign of his time, caused them to miss their aim and turn like deadly weapons to his own destruction. His condition of mind on quitting the castle and rejoining his companions is impossible to portray. Now that the interview was over, he felt all the shame of the false position in which he had placed himself. He realised that the step he had taken was an error, and that by the very humility he had feigned he had forfeited his popularity among the princes and prelates of Lombardy, who were bound to his cause by the slender ties of self-interest. His sincerity was, as he knew, doubted by those whom he most wished to conciliate, and the imperial sceptre seemed to be farther than ever from his grasp. In short, he too late discovered that not by the depth of his abasement, but by its falsity, he had defeated his own object.

Matilda was no less vexed and disappointed than the Pontiff at the failure of the interview, and she mingled her tears with those of Adelaide and her sorely-tried daughter. When the helpless infant who now lay asleep in Bertha's arms grew to man's estate, and came to die in Italy, the Countess called to mind the clinging embraces of the broken-spirited Queen, and opened her heart with almost maternal affection to the motherless exile.

The Princess, who was at this time in her thirty-second year, had succeeded on the death of her mother to the important and extensive Marquisate of Tuscany, and was generally styled "La grande Comtessa." Her warm reception of Bertha, and her mediation on Henry's behalf, had

inspired the German monarch with the idea that by gaining her friendship he might, at her decease, become the proprietor of some of her lands. But Matilda had other and more laudable intentions as to the disposal of her property. No sooner did she come into possession of her vast estates than she determined to make a present of them and of her personal effects to the Church, whose temporal welfare was the desire of her heart. "Peter," quaintly remarks the poet chronicler, "bore the Keys of Heaven, Matilda had resolved to bear the Etrurian Keys of Peter's patrimony in no other character than that of doorkeeper to Peter." "She was a widow," says the historian, "without children, and was not likely to re-marry. She had no other relatives than the Emperor and his children, and she was too Italian to willingly give her heritage to Germany. The heir of her heart was the Holy See itself, which in her eyes represented the faith of Italy and, according to the happy expression of the poet, 'her only love.'"

The bequest was not the result of a sudden outburst of generosity, for Matilda's mind was too well balanced to be subject to the fluctuating feelings of the moment. The arrangement for the transfer of her lands had cost her many hours of serious consideration during her mother's lifetime. Beatrice had foreseen that in the coming struggle between Church and State the Popes would have need of private resources as well as of faithful and loyal children.

After the departure of Henry, the Countess invited Gregory to make a Pontifical tour of inspection through the cities and towns of which she was ruler. In this manner, she introduced him to the property which he and future Sovereign-Pontiffs were to hold in trust for the benefit of the Church.

Other rich and rare offerings have been made from time to time to various occupants of the Papal Chair, but this one was unique in the history of the Holy See for its munificence and for the unmixed motives of its pious donor. The gift

was indeed a princely one, and worthy of the daughter of Boniface "the Magnificent." It included "Tuscany, Mantua, Parma, Reggio, Placentia, Ferrara, Modena, a part of Umbria, the Duchy of Spoleto, Verona, and almost all known as the Patrimony of St Peter from Verterbo to Orvieto, together, with a part of the March of Ancona, and included the spot not far from Pisa, where, according to traditions, St Peter first landed in Italy, and upon which a basilica dedicated to the Apostle had been erected."

That Matilda really made a transfer of her lands to the Popes has never been seriously disputed. The question, however, was afterwards raised with regard to the extent of the grant, and whether allodial possessions were included. "But the words of the conveyance are too clear to admit of doubt. She does not say, 'I have given all the estates which I *possess* and *hold* jure proprietario,' but she says, 'I have given all my estates to the Church jure proprietario,' *e.g.*, 'it is my wish that the Church should possess all my estates.' This very comprehensive language embraces all." [1]

The news of the endowment spread far and wide, and eventually reached the ears of the German King ere he had quitted Italy. It served to create a fresh grievance between himself and Gregory, to whose direct influence he unjustly attributed Matilda's unexpected course of action. He strenuously opposed the transfer on the ground that most of the lands, "the Marquisate of Florence and the Duchy of Spoleto especially, were fiefs of the crown, and appendages of imperial authority."

Finding that the "Great Countess" was not to be shaken from her purpose by his threats, he was all the more enraged with the unconscious Gregory. With the duplicity which appeared inherent in his nature, he matured a plan by which to draw the Pontiff within his power, and then make a treaty with Matilda for his release. He calculated with cunning

[1] *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*, by John L. von Mosheim, 1863.

art that once the Pope were his prisoner he could make what terms he pleased for his ransom. Accordingly, having despatched his wife and child to Germany, he sent envoys to Canossa begging Gregory for a second interview. So earnestly was the appeal worded, that the Pontiff, touched to the heart by Henry's evident desire to make amends, was unable to refuse what appeared so natural a request.

Although the princess could not divine the intentions of the King, she mistrusted his motives and feared a snare. Without expressing her suspicions to the Holy Father, she selected a picked body of men-at-arms and trusty knights, and placing herself at their head, formed a guard to defend the Pope in the event of any attack upon his person or liberty.

Escorted thus by "the daughter of St Peter," as Gregory loved to call her, he proceeded to the appointed place of the meeting on the banks of Virgil's "King of Rivers." "Already the venerable Gregory had passed the Po, in the hope of arriving at a veritable peace," relates the historian, when sounds as of someone riding in hot haste reached the ears of the alert princess. The figure of a horseman appeared in sight, who, on beholding the party, urged on his steed to greater efforts, and only arrested his career when within speaking distance of Matilda, who rode forth to meet him. With difficulty the exhausted messenger dismounted to greet her, and, overcome by fatigue, sank helpless at her feet. As soon as he was sufficiently received he explained that he had come to warn the Pontiff that Henry meditated his capture, and that the appointment was but a ruse to cover his real design.

Startled at this confirmation of her fears, Matilda held a consultation with Gregory, who preferred to treat the report as the outcome of excessive zeal or of dislike to the King, and disregarding the interruption, he calmly proceeded to the place of meeting.

Henry, accompanied by a retinue of Lombardians, who

had espoused his cause as their own, was first at the rendezvous. He greeted the Pontiff with apparent deference, "but his glance was so threatening, and his movements so restless," that Matilda's instinct of caution, aroused by the rumour of his intended treachery, was now fully awakened. Apprehensive of some ambuscade, and dreading every instant a personal assault upon Gregory, she caused him to be surrounded by her followers. Noting the ominous darkening of Henry's countenance at this precaution, she suddenly terminated the interview and withdrew with the unwilling Pontiff "to the fastnesses of her native mountains," ere the King had time to cut off her retreat.

Thus did the Countess, by her prudence and foresight avert the threatened danger to the Head of the Church. Thus did she thwart the machinations of a King, who, with the mad recklessness of a soul abandoned to passions, was hurrying along the downward path to destruction.

Smarting from the indignity of being outwitted by a woman, he determined on his return to his kingdom to redress his wrongs by force of arms, the usual method adopted in those days. His proud spirit, wounded to the quick by his mortifying defeat, had now found a second object upon whom to take a deep and full revenge. From that time he became his cousin's relentless persecutor, and although the chances of war more than once brought him into close proximity to her person, he never again looked upon her beautiful features after this meeting. This was also the last interview between the King and the Holy Father. Although Henry's thirst for revenge was not satisfied until nine years later he succeeded in driving Gregory from Rome, he never had another opportunity of speaking to him.[1]

Flinging a glance of impotent wrath upon the receding form of the good old man whom he would see no more on earth, and who only desired his well-being, the monarch

1 "Papam Mathildim rex ulterius neque vidit."—DONIZO.

turned northwards and continued his way by a circuitous route to Germany.

Matilda, who gathered from her kinsman's scowling brow the chagrin which Gregory's escape had caused him, gave an involuntary sigh of relief when a turn in the road hid his unwelcome figure from her view.

Donizo was present at this scene, and in his quaint verse describes, with glowing pen, the monarch's baseness and Matilda's frustration of his designs.[1]

The Pontiff's trustful nature had suspected no evil at the hands of the penitent of Canossa, and when the Countess rejoined him he mildly expostulated with her on the excess of caution which had led her to break off a conference from which he anticipated a sincere reconciliation with Henry. The interruption was in Gregory's opinion the more to be regretted, since the desire of the King for an interview intimated a wish on his part for the establishment of more amicable relations between himself and the Holy See. The Countess indeed could scarcely convince the Pontiff of the magnitude of the danger from which he had been rescued and which he had even now not altogether eluded.

Dreading pursuit at every turn, Matilda escorted him as far as Florence on the high road to Rome, and there they took leave of each other. Alighting from her horse she knelt all lowly in the road at the feet of one who was both the friend of her childhood and the Representative of her Faith. She was filled with gratitude to Heaven for choosing her for the second time as the instrument by which a Pontiff had been restored to his throne. Gregory himself was touched to the heart by the loyalty and devotion of the Countess, whose

[1] "Pastor pelle carens ad sum descendid ab arce
Mox est comitissa secuta,
Eridanum præsul Mathildis et optima secum
Regis Henrici qui papam tradere dicit.
Hoc ubi cognovit prudens hera mox cito movit
Seque suos fortes pettit cum præsule montes
Ingidial fractæ regis sunt et patefactæ."—DONIZO.

deep mourning garments gave evidence of her recent bereavement. With a voice trembling with emotion he raised his hand on high over her bowed form and bestowed the Apostolic blessing upon so valiant and humble a defender of the Church's liberty.

Gregory's arrival in Rome was marked by general rejoicings. "All the people," says the poet, "made holiday, and were transported with joy at the return of their pastor." On hearing of Matilda's generosity to the Holy See, and of her measures for the Pontiff's safety, "the air was filled with cries of benediction for the Pope and the Countess, and as many maledictions for the King."

In Matilda's eyes everything that her mother had ever loved was hallowed. Calling to mind the affection she had felt for her nephew, the Countess set aside her own feelings of anger at his behaviour and prepared to act as mediator between him and the Pontiff. As soon therefore as Gregory returned to Rome, she wrote to remind him of his promise to show clemency towards her erring relative.

Gregory's reply to this appeal "leads one to think that he had not forgotten the prayers which Beatrice addressed to him from her bed of death in favour of the unfortunate monarch." The answer, though stern in its justice, was tempered with a sincere desire for the King's re-admission within the pale of the church. "We are," he concluded, "animated against Henry neither by pride of the age nor by a vain ambition, but the discipline and care of the Church are the sole motives which animate us. We desire to treat him with tenderness if he will sincerely return to God, and with that mercy which will efface his faults. We will not forget the frailties of human nature, and will recall the pious remembrance of his father and mother."

Undaunted by the obstacles he had already encountered Gregory still purposed to be present at the meeting which was to be convened at Augsburg. Rudolph, Duke of Suabia, had promised to send an escort, and for this the Pontiff was

waiting ere he recommenced his journey. Henry's sudden flight from Spires, and the uncertainty of his movements after quitting Canossa, however, disconcerted the plans which had been made for sending a military guard for the protection of the Holy Father.

The Saxons dared not leave their castles, or withdraw any of their men, lest the King should bear down upon their unprotected property, and their fears were not groundless. "Foiled in the attempt to make Gregory his prisoner, he turned like a loosed lion upon Germany. His character seemed charged with unlooked-for energy and decision. He gathered an army and swept like a tempest through Suabia, leaving behind him a desert, and never ceased in his mad career of revenge until years after his miserable humility at Canossa he entered Rome in triumph." [1]

Under the circumstances it seemed highly improbable whether the Diet would be held after all, and Gregory's absence appeared unavoidable.

Both in Germany and in Italy, and more especially in Rome, there prevailed a vague feeling of misgiving and uneasiness as to the turn events were about to take.

Matilda dared not quit Tuscany, for Henry's partizans spread everywhere a discord among the malcontents who were to be met with in every principality, and from which the Marquisate was unhappily not exempt. The embers of disloyalty which smouldered within the hearts of these ungrateful Tuscans only needed the absence of the princess to be fanned into a general insurrection. Nothing but her firm personal control could keep these subjects in check, corrupted as they were by the bribes and promises of German emissaries. Messengers were at this period of uncertainty constantly passing between Tuscany and the Pontifical court.

Letters from Gregory full of tenderness and advice, assuring the Countess of his prayers and sympathy, were

[1] *Crown, the Crozier and the Cowl.*

not infrequent at this time, and proved a source of much solace to the daughter of the Margraves. "How great our anxieties are for your salvation He only understands Who searches all the secrets of the hearts."

He recommends her if possible to partake daily of Holy Communion, and commends her to the care of the Mother of our Lord. "Of this," he continued, "you may certainly be persuaded, that in proportion as she is more exalted, and better, and holier than any other mother in the same degree, she is more merciful and sweeter to sinners."[1]

But the journey to Augsburg was not undertaken after all. Henry, we learn, "not only refused a safe conduct to the Pope, but also guarded the passages to shut in the Pontiff in the roads of Germany, he even barred the route from Rome."

Information reached the watchful Matilda, of whose vigilance the poet speaks with pardonable pride, that a plot was formed by her perfidious cousin to arrest both herself and Gregory, and to keep them in Germany. The Countess at once sent warning to the Pontiff, and even his long-suffering spirit was stirred to anger at this fresh and indisputable evidence of Henry's treachery. "No one, not even the pious Matilda, now dared to speak of reconcilation." "From that day," remarks Donizo, "a change took place in the feelings of Matilda for the King." Any lingering sentiment of family affection which had survived was now utterly extinguished. "Henceforth she forgot the ties of blood" and devoted herself body and soul to the work of defeating Henry's machinations against the Church.

The nobles of Saxony and Suabia, who had looked to the conference as a settlement of further discord, had now lost all patience. They no longer trusted in a King whose promises neither religion nor honour held as binding, and resolved to throw off all allegiance to so faithless a sovereign.

[1] *Selection of Letters of Hildebrand, Gregory VII.* Translated by G. Finch.

# Rudolph as Emperor

The evil that Gregory had dreaded and had laboured to avert now fell upon Germany. The firebrand of civil war was about to carry desolation and grief into the homes of those who, but for Henry's tyranny, would have obeyed him with that devotion to the imperial authority for which his countrymen are remarkable.

In March (1077), the princes, seeing no other course open to them, arranged a meeting at Forcheim, in Bavaria. At this council they formally proclaimed their right to choose a new Sovereign, and "proceeded to the serious business of electing an Emperor." Without hesitation their votes were unanimously given to Rudolph of Suabia, with the limitation to his power that his throne was not to be hereditary.

Couriers were despatched from the Assembly to Rome and to Tuscany to acquaint the Pontiff and Matilda with the decisive action of the princes.

The news of the revolt was not favourably received by Gregory, and in his reply he expressed his disapproval of the conduct of the ecclesiastics who had taken part in the proceedings. "We have decided," wrote he, "that if the archbishops and bishops who have counselled Rudolph do not give us good reasons for their conduct, they shall be deposed from their Sees."[1]

Henry, who was naturally incensed at the daring violation of his authority by the Saxons, immediately invaded their country, and after being defeated in the field by Otto of Nordheim retired to collect his forces. Rudolph, who appears to have been particularly unfortunate in war, was in the meantime hard pressed by Henry's generals, and leaving Suabia, took refuge among the Saxons.

Gregory was now appealed to by the princes to give his public sanction to the election of their Emperor, but this he was unwilling to do, trusting that even now Henry would acknowledge his errors and make amends for his conduct.

The Pontiff was thus placed in a position in which it was

[1] Lib. IX. Ep. 21, *Epistolæ*.

hard to make a choice, "and for a time he decidedly took part with neither side."[1] "He, as the Father of all the faithful, desired only the peace of Europe, and seeing on either hand only one of his sons, he could not," continues the historian, "declare in favour of either of the belligerent parties." This Gregory himself explains in the following epistle addressed to the Germans:—"For our own heart fluctuates in great sorrow and grief seeing that through the pride of one man so many thousands of Christian men are delivered over to temptation and eternal death, and that the Christian religion is thrown into confusion, and the Roman Empire is brought to perdition. For each of these Kings seeks help from us, or rather from the Apostolic See over which we, although we are unworthy of it, preside.

"Given at Carpi on the 2nd of the calends of June."

About the same time the Pontiff wrote to Hugo of Cluny a letter in which he "regrets the cloisters and the profound tranquillity." "We are," he continues, "under the strain of much agony, overwhelmed with much business, which those who are near us are unable to comprehend or relieve." "Popes," justly remarks an impartial historian, "sometimes contended with sovereigns but never with sovereignties. The very act by which they absolved subjects from the oath of allegiance declared sovereignty inviolate. The Popes taught nations that no human power could reach the sovereign whose authority was suspended only by a divine power."[2]

Time was, however, passing on rapid wing, each day increasing the list of lives sacrificed in the strife between the armies of the rival chiefs and widening the breach between the King and his people. Gregory, grieved at the thought of so much bloodshed, and by the miseries and want which tread on the heels of civil war, was at last forced to take action in the matter. Unwilling to prolong the struggle between the

[1] *History of Germany.* J. Sime, M.A.

[2] *Formation of Christendom*, by the late J. W. Allies.

contending parties, and seeing no signs of repentance on Henry's part, the Pontiff yielded to the petitions of his oppressed children and decided in favour of the Suabian prince. The imperial iron crown of Charlemagne was in the possession of Henry, but Gregory sent Rudolph one made of gold, and bearing the following inscription:—"Petra dedid Petro, Petrus diadema Rodulpho."

News of her son's abasement, his flagrant breach of faith and of the rebellion of his subjects, was not long in penetrating the cloisters within which the King's mother had retired fifteen years previously. Her strength, diminishing with age, had been nearly exhausted by troubles, remorse and anxiety, and this last blow crushed out the feeble spark of life. Gregory made it his special care to visit and console the sick Empress, and he rarely quitted her during her last hours on earth. She suffered no pain, and lay repeating, in a low and trembling voice, "the Penitential Psalms which so eloquently express sorrow for past sins." She joined her supplications to those of the priests around her in their pleas for mercy, and in their prayers for the dying. At the words "Go forth, thou Christian soul," the burden of life's disappointment fell from the wearied Empress, she commended her spirit to God and quietly passed away.

She died just at a time when her son was engaged in conflict with his people, and when there came into the world the little Prince Henry who in after years assumed the unfilial task of judging and punishing his father's misdeeds.

The Pontiff himself celebrated the requiem Mass, and gave directions that prayers should be recited for the repose of her soul. She was buried with all the ceremonial due to her rank in the Church of Saint Petronilla, beside the tomb of that saint near the altar.

Henry was unable to be present at the funeral since he was under the ban of the Church, nor was it possible for him in any case to quit Germany at this juncture.

After a year's cessation of hostilities in order to mass his forces, he again made an incursion into Saxony, and an engagement took place on the banks of a tributary of the Elbe. The principal command was entrusted to the Duke of Brabant, who had succeeded his relative, Godfrey le Bossu, the husband of Matilda, in the title. This soldier, who had not yet attained his twenty-first year, became one of the most renowned of mediæval warriors, and achieved a reputation as the noblest and most chivalrous knight of the time. Immortalised by being the hero of Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered,* Godfrey is best known to history by his surname of Bouillon, from the castle in the Ardennes which he inherited from his mother, the saintly Ida.

The youthful commander met Rudolph face to face, and, after a desperate struggle between the two combatants, the hand of the newly-crowned King was struck off by his young but powerful antagonist. Thus disabled, he received the thrust of Godfrey's lance through his cuirass, and fell from his horse at the very moment when the tide of victory, turning in his favour, had secured for him the throne of Germany. His friends rushed forward to rescue him, and with some difficulty conveyed the wounded monarch from the battlefield, their passage being impeded by the retreat of the forces under Henry, who had just suffered a signal repulse. Otto of Nordheim, Rudolph's commander, unaware of the disaster that had befallen his chief, pursued his advantage with so much vigour that at length the imperial army was compelled to give way, leaving the successful general in possession of the field.

The shouts of the exultant Saxons rang in the ears of the dying monarch, who, on hearing the news, exclaimed, "Now I suffer joyfully whether I live or die, or whatever is the will of God." He begged his friends not to stand around his bedside, but to go to the immediate aid of his wounded soldiers who had fought so bravely. It is said that the Saxon lords were so touched by his courage and piety that

they swore to him that if God should spare him, even if he lost both hands, he should still be their King.

After lingering in great pain for three days, the unfortunate Rudolph, who had worn the crown for nearly three years, exchanged it for a well-deserved and higher reward of his virtues. He was buried in his royal robes in the choir of the cathedral near his palace in the Saxon town of Merseberg. A recumbent effigy in brass was afterwards placed on his tomb, which bore the following inscription:—

"Within this tomb lies King Rudolph.
Slain in defence of his country's laws,
He fell a holy victim in a battle won by his people.
Death was to him life, for he died for the Church.
Had he reigned in more peaceful days he would have been without an equal for prudence and wisdom since the days of Charlemagne."

# Matilda, Countess of Tuscany

## CHAPTER IX

"The tumult of each sacked and burning village;
The shout that every prayer for mercy drowns;
The soldiers' revel in the midst of pillage;
The wail of famine in beleaguered towns;
Were half the power that fills the world with terror,
Were half the wealth bestowed on camps and courts,
Given to redeem the human mind from error,
There were no need of arsenals and forts."

LONGFELLOW.

WHILE Henry was engaged in conflict with his vassals, Gregory, upon whose shoulders rested the responsibility of Christendom, was exercising his prerogative as Head of the Church by distributing praise or blame to the secular powers.

In a letter dated 1080 and addressed to "William, King of the English," he exhorts that monarch to persevere in the practices of his religion, and concluded his epistle with the following words of blessing:—"May the Almighty God and Father himself mercifully vouchsafe, so as to inspire and establish you, that in this world, by the merit of your virtues, your kingdom and power may increase, and that in the world to come He may introduce you with holy kings to the heavenly kingdom above which is inconceivably better.

"Given at Rome the 8th of the calends of May."

The Pontiff also addressed himself about this time "To the Britons." He depicts the vices of the times and calls upon all faithful Christians to abstain from them and as far as possible to live in peace with all men. "If any one shall have carried arms except for defending his own just rights or those of his lord or friend, or also of the poor, or moreover in order to defend the churches (and yet he must not

have taken them without the advice of religious men who have known how to impart wisely the counsel of eternal salvation), or shall have possessed himself of other people's goods unjustly, or shall have burnt with anger against his neighbour, such a person can by no means produce the fruits of true repentance. For we declare that penance to be fruitless which is so received that the penitent remains in the same fault, or in one similar to it which is either worse or rather less serious.

"Given at Rome on the 8th of the calends of December."

Besides issuing these various admonitions to the faithful, Gregory was at this time (1080) engaged in one of the most pleasing duties of his pontificate, that of choosing and confirming to the service of the Church the most fitting and holy of her sons. He consecrated Hugh of Dauphiné, a monk only twenty-seven years of age, but already distinguished for his learning and piety, to the See of Grenoble, which his name has rendered world-renowned. The new prelate, who was so tender-hearted that "when hearing confessions he mingled his tears with those of the penitent," held the Bishopric until his death fifty-two years later.

Matilda, who loved to acknowledge whatever was best in religion, science or art, took great interest in the future saint and "begged earnestly to be instructed by his good counsels and assisted by his prayers." She not only defrayed the expenses connected with his consecration, but also presented the Bishop, whose "youth, princely demeanour and unassuming piety attracted all hearts" with a crosier and "other episcopal adornments." Her generosity went still further, for we learn that she also gave him "a library of suitable books" which she had herself translated and considered would be of service in his studies.

That same year the clouds of war began to gather upon the fair horizon of Italy, nor were they dispersed until death stayed the destroying hand of the German monarch. The loss of the Saxon leader had paralysed the movements of his

followers and left Henry at liberty to determine on a course of action which had for its object the subjugation of those who had hitherto opposed him. His chief ire was directed against Gregory, who had placed him beyond the pale of the Church, and he decided by a bold move to drive him from St Peter's and to substitute a Pontiff of his own choice. For this purpose he held a Council at which he, in common with the simoniacal prelates who had been excommunicated, elected his chancellor to the Papal Chair. This was Guibert Corregio, a native of Parma and Archbishop of Ravenna. Corregio was a man of high family and was both an eloquent and learned prelate, although he was not chosen for these qualifications, but because he was the avowed enemy of the reigning Pontiff.

On hearing of Henry's proceedings a solemn Council was convened in Rome to protest in the name of the Church against the threatened usurpation of the pontifical prerogative.

Matilda came from Lucca, where she had been staying, in order to be present at the debate upon the results of which grave issues were to depend. She was accompanied by the Bishop of Reggio, a man of great talent and exemplary life, but who was suspected of leanings towards Germany.

A contrast to the time-serving prelate was John the Hermit, whose austerities and zeal for the Church had made his name renowned, and who also travelled with the Countess to Rome. He had been elected Abbot of Canossa, although he still retained his solitary habits and his familiar appellation.

The discussion was both long and animated, and was characteristic of the fearlessness with which each member of the Council avowed his opinions. The Bishop of Reggio, in the course of a long speech, suggested, in order to save unseemly wrangling and factional disputes, that a compromise should be effected. He proposed various means by which either the anti-pope might be induced to retire from

his position or, at least, make a solemn promise not to interfere in Church government.

At these words John the Hermit sprang to his feet and, forgetting the presence of the Pontiff, electrified his hearers with an impassioned speech which carried with it the sympathetic convictions of the entire assemblage. "No peace," cried he in a voice of thunder, "can be made which will be a war declared against God and His Church." Turning towards Matilda, whose opinions he believed favoured those of the Bishop, he continued, in a tone of deep reproach: "What! great and valiant Countess! Thou the daughter of Saint Peter! Wilt thou consent thus to lose the fruits of all thy labours, and give away the victory accorded to the prayers of those who remain faithful to the Church? No! No! The contest is for the cause of Christ. Do not hesitate. March forward! The God of Battles will be our Protector."

This speech, delivered in stentorian tones which reached every part of the hall and thrilled the listeners to unanimous agreement, won an approving smile from the Countess, who magnanimously overlooked the allusions to herself. Encouraged by the general signs of assent around him, and carried away by his fervour, the orator declared, in decisive terms, that they would accept no Pontiffs but those of their own election, and that they would hold no parley with the excommunicated anti-pope.

After the meeting had dispersed, Matilda and other noble members of the laity remained behind to consult with the Holy Father as to the best means of avoiding the scandal to the Christian religion which would arise were the anti-pope allowed to enter Rome. The princess promised the aid of her army to withstand his passage by way of Tuscany, as she had done thirty years ago. She offered also to furnish a bodyguard for the Pontiff to escort him to her marquisate should he be forced—which was highly improbable—to relinquish his throne.

Although Matilda's opposition to the pretensions of his

candidate to the Holy See was not unexpected by Henry she nevertheless incurred his anger by thus openly embracing the cause of the Pope and the Independence of Italy. She had, by this public avowal of her opinions, declared herself the opponent of Germany, and must therefore be considered as a dangerous enemy who merited summary chastisement. Having, as he believed, effectually deprived Gregory of his authority, and being relieved by the death of Rudolph from all fear of a Saxon rising during his absence, he prepared for an incursion into Italy.

Leaving his kingdom in charge of his son-in-law, Frederic, the new Duke of Suabia, who had married the German princess, Alice, he hurried to the Alps. For the second time, and in more seasonable weather, he effected the perilous passage which he had before undertaken on his way to Canossa. Then his companions were two women and a helpless babe, but now, as he reflected with complacency, he was accompanied by the flower of the imperial army. Whatever feelings of compunction may have crossed his mind as he once again set foot in Italy, they had no effect upon his punitive intentions. His purpose was fixed and immovable. He calculated that by the very suddenness of his invasion, and by the rapidity of his warlike movements, to take his so-called enemies completely by surprise.

Rumours of Henry's approach had, however, in spite of his precautions, reached both the Pontiff and Matilda. Gregory, whose gentle soul shrank from bloodshed, was greatly concerned at the news. According to the following letter addressed to "those upon whose fidelity he reckoned in Lombardy," he was disquieted also with regard to the issue of the coming encounter. "If our daughter Matilda," he continues, "cannot sustain our efforts, what will happen? You do not know the spirit of the soldiers. What will happen if they refuse to march since they say that all resistance is useless, and nothing remains but to submit to the Emperor. Act, then, that the Countess may be able to

reckon on your succour as soon as the King enters Lombardy." "There was scarcely an answer to this appeal," we are told, and the same authority adds, "Matilda was not discouraged." Donizo deplores the fact that "of the race of the mighty Margraves of Tuscany there remains but the feeble arm of a woman to stand between the Pontiff and his enemies."

A grave crisis was at hand, and on the issue of the contest depended, as the Countess was well aware, not only the freedom of the Church but also that of her beloved country. Far from recoiling from the formidable prospect which lay before her, she prepared, with all the courage of her race, to thwart the threatened invasion by a spirited defence against her vindictive kinsman. She would not admit even to herself the possibility of defeat, and in all confidence in the success of her arms she summoned her vassals to rally round her for the protection of their liberties.

The Tuscans rose as one man at her bidding. Arming themselves with whatever implements of warfare lay nearest to hand they rushed down the mountain slopes and flocked in such numbers in the valleys that the hills and dales seemed teeming with human life.

The princess was much affected by this spontaneous answer to her call, and in her sweet, modulated voice she thanked the peasants for their promptness and allegiance. She spoke to them of the gravity of the situation, of the seriousness of the struggle in which they were to be engaged, and of the superiority both in equipment and numbers of the enemy. She reminded them that by prayer and steadfastness all these obstacles to their success could be overcome, and that upon their resolution and courage hung not only their own fate but the future of their country.

Her speech was answered by a burst of cheering from the men, who declared themselves ready to follow her to death, and amid their acclamations she mounted her horse and placed herself at the head of the devoted band. At the sight of the beautiful and graceful figure of their commander, who,

in all the pride of womanhood, dexterously reined in her prancing steed, the excitement of her followers could no longer be held within bounds. With loud and repeated shouts of "Saint Peter!" and "Matilda!" they committed themselves to her guidance and discretion, and begged her to conduct them to the conflict.

Their enthusiasm was contagious, and with a rashness born of courage the intrepid Countess rode forward to meet the German forces all unprepared as she was and at once offered battle. Undeterred by the overwhelming numbers of the enemy, the mountaineers gallantly opposed themselves to the attack of the well-armed soldiers arrayed before them, and with the battle cry of "Matilda!" dashed valiantly forward.

Again and again were they driven back, and again and again they returned to the charge with an impetuosity which threatened to carry all before it. In vain they threw themselves upon the ranks of the veterans; they were unable to withstand the disciplined movements of the imperial troops. In vain the gallant Tuscans struggled to maintain their ground. Gradually they were forced to yield their positions. Their lines wavered and broke, and the onward rush of the well-armed foe into their midst threw them at length into hopeless confusion.

Finding the day was lost, Matilda, who had sustained no injury during the contest, yielded to the advice of her knights and gave the signal for a retreat. She unwillingly withdrew from the scene of conflict with the remnant of her army, narrowly escaping the German soldiers who endeavoured to intercept her flight.

Following up his advantage, Henry pursued his passage southwards, his way being traced by burning villages and devastated homesteads. Scarely had his cousin thrown herself into Florence than he appeared before the gates and commenced to invest the "City of Flowers and Flower of Cities." There had been no opportunity of preparing for a prolonged

assault, and after enduring the untold hardships and horrors of an unexpected siege for some weeks it could hold out no longer. The Countess, seeing the post was untenable, gave the inhabitants leave to capitulate and to make the best terms they could with the King while she herself hurried to the defence of Padua.

She had quitted Florence none too soon. Scarcely had she passed through the gates, unperceived in the darkness and confusion, than the German soldiers poured in from another quarter and sacked and pillaged to their hearts' content.

The terrified citizens crowded into the cathedral and churches for safety, and from the sacred precincts viewed with horror and dismay the conflagrations which marked the destruction of their homes. Loud cries of anguish and anger rose into the air as the conquerors, sated with revenge and laden with the cherished possessions of the Florentines, quitted the scene of destruction and passed through the dismantled walls. Trampling the growing crops and tender vines with wicked recklessness beneath their martial tread, the soldiers proceeded on their way to spread desolation throughout Matilda's marquisate.

It was evident that Padua could not long hold out, and again the great Countess—never so great as now in the time of trial—was obliged to evacuate the city before the arrival of the Germans cut off her passage of exit.

Matilda retained throughout this crucial time "that admirable presence of mind which had hitherto neutralised the direst evils of her situation, and which at this juncture shone forth with still greater lustre." So far from being paralysed by the dangers which threatened her on every side, she maintained her high standard of courage—not the courage of despair but of action—which only awaited the right moment to risk an engagement. Her army was being constantly reinforced by her affectionate and loyal countrymen. But their services, though freely and willingly

tendered, would be but of little assistance in an open battle, and of this Matilda was aware.

The princess, therefore, discreetly resolved to wait until she could see her way to make a stand against the King. In the meantime she slowly but steadily retired before his triumphant soldiers. Heading her troops she rode on in fearless security through her domains, and, with the ability of an experienced veteran, herself superintended the orderly retreat.

Alas! the tide of misfortune seemed to be set against the Countess. Everywhere her gallant band, now becoming sadly thinned, met with a series of reverses in the many harassing skirmishes with the imperial soldiers. Town after town and village after village fell into the hands of the invaders, who followed like hounds closely upon the heels of the retiring Matilda. With dauntless courage she maintained the cause of freedom, even though she saw her possessions falling from her like quivering leaves beneath the cruel blast of the autumn wind.

At length there was but one stronghold left in which the great Countess could make her last stand for civil and religious liberty. This was the castle wherein she first drew breath and which she had always tenderly regarded as her home. Here she was safe, for even were the enemy bold enough to scale the rugged heights from which it reared its proud crest to the blue sky of heaven, the solid triple walls which surrounded it offered an impassable barrier to all unwelcome intruders.

The activity and bustle consequent on Matilda's arrival and hurried preparations for defence brought before the memory of Donizo the stirring events of long ago. He depicts "with the pen of a ready writer" the martial array which was formerly displayed within the stronghold. "The warlike spirit of its founders awoke in the old fortress," he tells us, "and Canossa believed its youth was returned and that it saw again the glorious days of Azzo." The poet's

inspiration filled the besieged with enthusiasm "and magnified even the weakest of its defenders into heroes." Never since the days of her grandsire had so many persons remained within the walls of Canossa. The doughty warrior had his trained soldiers to keep watch and ward on its ramparts, and none were admitted within the citadel during the time of war but those who could contribute towards its defence. His descendant, however, was less exacting but more humane. She received all who from prudence, fear or weakness sought its lordly shelter. The terrified townsmen and peasants toiled up its steep ascent with their sick or aged relatives, often carrying the feeble on their own shoulders. Hither they brought their goats and mules and such articles as were of value to themselves, such as implements for agriculture and vine cultivation or treasured memorials of their happy homes. Scarcely had Matilda, with incredible rapidity, victualled and garrisoned her stronghold for the impending siege than thither marched the avenging King.

What bitter memories must the scene have revived in the mind of Henry as he gazed once again upon the fortress rising with forbidding aspect before him. "He would," remarks the historian, "have given the price of four thousand golden crowns and more never to have seen its towers." The position was changed, however, since his last visit. Not as a suppliant and an insincere penitent was he now approaching the frowning battlements, but as a victor and in his true character as an avowed enemy of the Church.

It had always been the policy of the Margraves to guard this bulwark of their northern frontier, and Matilda had invariably followed the same rule. There was but one accessible side of the castle, and this was so well defended that it was impossible for the King to force his way even as far as the outer wall. Availing herself of this exit, the Countess, with indefatigable vigour and inconceivable rapidity of movement made constant excursions. In spite of the watch of the German outposts she passed unchallenged

down the steep decline and "conveyed food and arms to the surrounding villages, castles and garrisons."

In vain Henry, almost maddened by this prolonged and successful opposition, attempted to entrap his adversary; he was no match for her superior adroitness. In vain he tried, by making a feint of withdrawing his troops, to induce her to quit even for an hour her point of vantage. It was impossible to throw the wary strategist off her guard. "She was not," as Donizo remarks with pride, "duped by these ruses, she re-united her troops dispersed in the district, she counted upon the help of God."

Matilda appears to have possessed in a remarkable degree the ingenuity of her sex, and this she put into practice. She saw a way out of every dilemma and baffled her cousin at every turn. "Even if it were possible," records the appreciative Donizo, "to tell of her exploits, her virtues, my verses would not be sufficient were they as numerous as the stars."

But Henry did not mean to be thwarted in his intention of securing Canossa. His pride was up in arms. It galled his haughty spirit to feel that for the second time he was outwitted by his relative. How was it possible for him to return to Germany with his manhood shamed at being thus defeated by a woman of his own kin? His name would be held in scorn by every wandering musician who travelled the length and breadth of the empire, and who in their songs were wont to extol the deeds of the brave.

With grim determination to force his cousin to capitulate, he made preparations for a protracted and severe investment of the castle, trusting by cutting off supplies to starve her into submission.

His plans were carried out even to the smallest detail, and not an avenue of escape was left to the Countess. It was now impossible for her to establish communication with the village, and the approaches to the heights were strictly guarded by a cordon of sentinels, who were ordered, under pain of death, to allow no one to pass their lines.

Thus deprived of outside relief it seemed as if the garrison could no longer hold out, and but for the example of hopeful courage set them by the princess they would have been reduced to despair. Donizo himself, who appears to have taken part of the command again, finds utterance in verses extolling the heroism of the intrepid Matilda, whose unfailing cheerfulness sustained the fainting hearts of her people. "Alone she resisted the swords around her and the engines of war. The attack threw them all into terror. Matilda combated no longer, but did not ask for mercy." Even her confessor, the saintly and aged Anselm, has placed on record his astonishment at her powers of resistance and endurance. He speaks with admiration of the wonderful manner in which "her gentle frame sustained all the burdens of civil government and the fatigues of actual war."

At the very moment when the Countess had exhausted all her resources, and the reduction of Canossa appeared inevitable, a plan suggested itself to her fertile imagination by which she might not only effect the escape of the garrison, but also by one bold stroke retrieve her fortunes. An opportunity soon occurred for reducing her scheme to practice, and of this Matilda, with her usual quickness of perception, gladly availed herself.

One early morning in October she noticed a thick mist which lay over the valley, and hiding the camp from view rose like a pillar of cloud and commenced to envelop the castle in its grey vapour. Now was Matilda's time for action. She called to her aid a few trusty men, and prepared, under the friendly shelter of the fog, to make her projected descent upon the enemy. Her troops were, as she knew, acquainted with every inch of the ground, and following her lead they sallied forth, their hearts beating almost to suffocation, a silent, desperate band, bound on a dangerous adventure.

Moving cautiously lest a falling fragment of rock should betray them, and favoured by the obscurity, they descended

the rugged heights and drew close to the camp, unchallenged by the sentinels, and unseen by the soldiers, who were still sunk in slumber.

With her usual forethought for the safety of her subjects the Countess gave strict orders that the triple gates should be firmly secured behind her, and were not to be opened until the garrison was either relieved or reduced to the last extremity. Thus, in the event of the failure of the sortie, the villagers and others within its sheltering walls would be safe from the fate which threatened them should Henry effect an entrance.

As the brave Tuscans wound their way down the steep decline and were lost to view in the mist, John the Hermit, who was in the castle, prepared to aid them by his prayers. Placing himself at the head of the monks who had assembled thither for protection, he led the way to the highest tower of the castle. Animated with zeal for the cause in which Matilda was risking her life, and with a lively faith in its ultimate success, the black-robed procession lifted up their voices and lustily chanted aloud psalms of victory and of triumph. Their confidence revived the military spirit of the defenders, who were awaiting in dread expectancy news of their comrades, and bemoaning their forced inaction. "Let us fight while the Abbot prays," they cried. The excitement become contagious, the trumpets sounded the alarm, and, disregarding in their eagerness the orders of the Countess, they passed through the courtyards and rushed forth a wild and disorganised medley. Startling the slumbering Germans from their heavy sleep, they threw themselves upon the imperial army almost simultaneously with the band led by Matilda, whose noisy greetings of their comrades served to add to the general confusion. Fortunately for the rash Tuscans the fog prevented the enemy from perceiving their numerical weakness, and Henry, in anticipation of being surrounded, gave orders for a retreat before the path should be blocked. The standard-bearer, scarcely awake, seized his

charge, but, encumbered with the weight of his armour and unnerved by the suddenness of the movement, fell from his horse. Ere he could rejoin his troop he was surrounded, and though at Matilda's command he was allowed his liberty, the standard remained in the possession of the heroic daughter of Italy.

So quickly had the affair passed in point of time that the princess could scarcely realise that the victory was hers, and won, moreover, without the loss of any of her brave men.

As in a dream she listened to the retreating steps of her foes, whose forms were faintly outlined in the mist which soon hid them completely from view. Recalling her followers, who were spoiling the deserted camp, Matilda returned to the castle to relieve the fears of the garrison.

As she wearily climbed the steep rock upon which her fortress reared its massive towers, she recalled to mind her first battle. Sixteen years had passed since she, a girl of fifteen, had risked her life in actual warfare for the defence of her country and the rights of the Church. For the second time, as she reflected, the weak arm of a woman had restrained the imperial power in its encroachments upon civil and religious liberty.

From the heights above there was borne upon her ear the rise and fall of the exultant songs of the monks. In ignorance of their wonderful deliverance, they gave expression to their confidence in the Lord of Hosts in hymns full of trust and faith.

As Matilda neared the castle the joyful news preceded her, the massive gates recoiled on their hinges, and the besieged poured forth to greet and congratulate their brave defenders.

The Countess proceeded first of all to the chapel, where she laid the captured trophy upon the altar, and prostrating herself in prayer she returned thanks to God for His merciful protection.

It was a consoling thought that the bruised spirit of her

mother had been spared the knowledge of the desolation of her beautiful marquisate. She was spared also the poignant pang of feeling that it was her nephew's hand that had wrought so much misfortune in sunny Tuscany.

The superior generalship displayed by the Great Countess had converted her well-timed and orderly retreat to Canossa into a triumph, and the final sortie against the German troops had secured for her a well-earned reprieve. The success of her exploit had inspirited her people and left Matilda herself at liberty to concentrate her mind upon the best means of providing for Gregory's safety in the event of Henry's investment of the capital. The monarch's defeat was, as she well knew, only a temporary reverse, and she intuitively felt that he would revenge himself by marching upon Rome.

Now that she was relieved from the presence of the enemy she was free to strengthen the defences of her people. She made a rapid disposal of her military resources, and issued directions for the fortification of her towns and for their occupation by chosen troops.

Canossa, fortunately, was well supplied with water,[1] and to the officers of the garrison she entrusted the charge of victualling the castle, and supplying the inmates with implements for their protection during her absence.

All these details and many others were planned out with methodical precision ere she sought her couch on the night that had followed her victory.

[1] The Right Reverend Monseigneur Gradwell, Domestic Prelate to His late Holiness, Pope Leo XIII., who paid with that Pontiff a visit to Canossa, in October 1877, writes thus :—"One thing we did find amidst the crumbling ruins, and that was an abundance of fresh clean spring water. Beyond barely tasting it and pronouncing it delicious, I am afraid we made little other use of it than to give ourselves a free ablution of face, neck and hands. Our pilgrimage to Canossa was accomplished. Truly, there was not much to see, and I fear that few travellers will care to give the time, the money and the labour necessary to secure a draught of water from that rocky height."—BLUEMANTLE (*Catholic Fireside*, June 1902)

# To the Aid of Gregory

At break of day Matilda, who seemed impervious to fatigue, was already astir and making a tour of the citadel. She ascertained, by an exhaustive scrutiny, the system employed for its defence, and by a comprehensive mental calculation of its resisting powers formed her opinion of its term of endurance. She made a thorough inspection of the troops, testing their efficiency and appointing to each his several duties. She warned them to be alert, to maintain constant and steady watch, to be obedient to those in command, and to keep on friendly terms with their comrades. She relieved their apprehensions by telling them that they need not fear any immediate reprisals on the part of the King, and assured them that if they carefully carried out her injunctions they would be in security until her return.

Having issued these admonitions and instructions for the guidance of her people, the Great Countess passed into the privacy of her oratory, where she invoked the aid of Heaven on her momentous undertaking, and besought the monks to unite in prayer for the safety of the Pontiff.

Her arrangements were, as far as human wisdom could foresee, completed, and it was still early morning when, accompanied by a small cavalcade of faithful knights, she commenced her journey to Rome.

In the meantime, what pen shall venture to describe the mortification of the King at the exasperating repulse which had stemmed his hitherto continuous tide of success.

Through the vaporous curtain which hid his own and Matilda's men from view came the triumphant sounds which celebrated his cousin's victory, and which envenomed his soul with hate. It was impossible, while the mist lasted, to take any decisive action, and when it cleared away the sun shone out upon the wreckage of his camp and upon the castle wherein his enemy rested in safety.

From his youth up Henry's irritable temperament could ill brook the least contradiction, and the sight of the towers which, for the second time, had witnessed his humiliation

filled him with unutterable rage. Maddened at his defeat and at having wasted so many hours on the vexatious siege, he withdrew his scattered forces and restored them to their usual military precision. All the vindictive passions of his nature were aroused by Matilda's successful resistance, and smarting under the sense of his defeat, he thought of nothing but the realisation of his plans for revenge. There was but one way to draw her from the entrenchment of her castle, and that was by a march upon Rome. He surmised that her loyalty to the Pontiff would cause her to proceed to his relief with all possible diligence, and it would be an easy matter for his forces to surround the small number she could muster. The reverses which had driven her to her fortress were the prelude to the ruin by which he intended to humble her proud spirit. Once he had gained possession of Rome his path would be clear and he could crush his dual foes at one blow.

But Henry had not gauged the fertility of his cousin's resources nor the celerity with which she reduced them to action. When he arrived before the walls of the Eternal City, confident of an easy and unopposed entrance, he found the inhabitants in arms, sentinels posted on the walls, and the gates closed against him. The Great Countess had anticipated his intentions and had hurried to Rome to warn the Pontiff and to take measures for ensuring his safety. Her coming had been hailed with unrestrained delight by the faithful citizens, who regarded her as a veritable tower of strength and placed the utmost reliance upon her counsels.

Henry established his army on a spot known as Nero's Field, an appropriate name and significant of the vengeance he intended to take upon an old man and a woman for resisting his wickedness and his tyranny.

For more than two years the imperial army lay beneath the city gates awaiting with feverish impatience the end of the siege. The courage of the home-loving Germans was only sustained by the prospect of the rich plundor they would

enjoy when once they had effected an entrance. They suffered from dreadful hardships; over four hundred men died from illness, and it was reported among the Italians that the sword of St Peter had stricken them. They became weakened by fever and ague, and the summer heat and malaria, which the King escaped by going into the hills, still further diminished their rapidly-thinning numbers. Nor were they much better off during the winter months. The heavy roads, we are told, added to the many difficulties of transport, and the supplies of food often failed or were inadequate to their wants. In addition to their sufferings and privations the besiegers were harassed and annoyed by the frequent night sorties organised by Matilda, which deprived them of rest by requiring them to be for ever on the alert. "That heroine of the Middle Ages resisted with a courage and audacity that Ancient Rome would not have disavowed. It seemed that her unshaken attachment to Gregory had given her something of his character and of his grandeur of soul."[1]

"Her attacks were made on the most hardy," Donizo triumphantly remarks, and filled the foe with such terror that the anti-pope asked Henry "if it were not possible to make a diversion and at all costs take the Countess as a prisoner to Germany." But Matilda appeared invulnerable. Her troops, rendered confident by having kept the King at bay so long, and filled with the spirit of retaliation so essentially characteristic of their nation, hurled defiance and railleries from the ramparts at the King and the anti-pope. Stimulated by the spirit of the Great Countess and her knights the Romans were wary and vigilant, and maintained unceasing watch from the walls of the capital over the movements of the soldiery.

The Germans were in no mood to reply to the taunts of the Italians. The various troubles which had overtaken them, and the loss of so many of their comrades, had rendered them oblivious of all save a desire to return to their native land.

[1] Voigt.

The King, on the contrary, was still busy weaving schemes of revenge upon the Pope and Matilda. He never relaxed for an instant his crafty observation of the gates which held his prey in safe keeping. By promise of reward he established communication within the city, and a plan was put into execution by which to divert the attention of the garrison from the strict guard of the walls.

"Several houses in the vicinity of Saint Peter's" were set on fire by the traitors, and but for the presence of mind of Gregory a serious conflagration would doubtless have ensued.

The aged Pontiff at once proceeded to the spot from whence the flames were already spreading with rapidity. Convincing the excited populace, by his own example of calmness, that there was no danger to be apprehended he caused the soldiers to return to their duties, and he himself, with the aid of the people, subdued the flames. So quickly was the fire extinguished that a report gained credence that it was accomplished by miraculous means. It was said that Gregory simply made the sign of the cross over the spot whence the flames were issuing and forbade their further progress, and that they immediately obeyed, their fierce glare dying away into utter blackness.

The Pontiff's promptness of action allayed the terrors which Henry had counted upon as the prelude to a general panic, a state of affairs by which he hoped to profit. He lost self-reliance and became less and less confident of effecting an entrance into the city.

Tired of the inaction he again and again quitted his camp with a company of veterans and threw himself upon the unprotected property of Matilda in the hopes of inducing her to return to Tuscany.

But Matilda was proof against this fearful and searching test of her fidelity. She never once thought of her own interests, but with an unparalleled devotion to the papal throne tried every means within her power to preserve it

inviolate. She was ready to lose all, even life itself, to secure the safety of the Sovereign Pontiff, the Head of the Church and the friend and counsellor of her youth. "That lighthouse of Christians," says the poet, "burned with celestial fire. Family, servants, riches, she was prodigal with all, sacrificed all."

It was, however, a terrible trial for the Countess to hear of the misfortunes which were befalling her subjects, and her heart ached as she thought of their sufferings and privations. Reports reached her from time to time of the horrible devastation which was being caused by Henry's followers. She heard of harvests unreaped and trodden down, of vineyards untended, of burning homesteads and vacant chairs, and of young bright lives sacrificed to Henry's insensate revenge. It was difficult to restrain her impulse to fly to their relief, but she dared not leave Gregory to the tender mercies of the King, and committing her cause to God she awaited with calm assurance an opportunity of returning to her distracted country.

In the marquisate of Tuscany "all bent before the storm. Towns opened their gates at Henry's approach and castles surrendered, in some cases without making any show of resistance. What could the people do otherwise? There was no one to command or direct them, and so they made the best terms they could with the conquerors."

News of the surrender of her property to the Germans was carried by pale-faced, terrified messengers to the Countess, who shared in their lamentations, though the tears were not shed for herself. Her sorrow was for the people who had known no other masters than her ancestors and who had now fallen into Henry's cruel hands. She fervently echoed the pious ejaculations of her grief-stricken subjects that Beatrice had not lived to see the evil days that had come upon her sunny Italy. Fortified with that calmness with which religion endows her suffering children, Matilda bore all without a murmur. Not even when tidings reached

her of the capitulation of her most beautiful city did she utter word of complaint or regret though her heart was sore within her.

The citizens of Lucca, who were inclined to Henry's cause, opened their gates at his approach without even making a feint of defence or striking a blow for their liberties. Matilda's palace was looted of its treasures, and part of her valuable library, which had cost her years of labour, was maliciously destroyed without a protest from the terrified citizens.

Anselm, the aged Bishop, managed to escape and made his way, aided by the darkness and the faithful peasants, to Canossa, which, even in the absence of its Lady, afforded asylum to the oppressed. Donizo the chaplain, John the Hermit, and other holy men still remained within its walls and received in the name of the Countess those who had been rendered homeless by the cruel soldiery. Fortunately for the refugees Matilda's plans for victualling had been fully carried out and the supply of water appeared inexhaustible.

Henry, who had intended to keep Anselm as a hostage, was very wrathful at his escape, but he consoled himself by placing in the episcopal chair a prelate of his own choice. The anti-pope, who entertained a great respect for the Bishop "whose virtues were known to all," wrote from the camp advising him to be at peace with him and to leave the failing cause of Matilda.

Anselm in reply sent a spirited letter, in which he denied Guibert's right to the pontifical throne and authority, and concluded his epistle as follows:—"As to thy entreaty that I would no longer continue to circumvent and deceive a very noble lady, I take God to witness that I, keeping near her, have no temporal or worldly views. I pray God to take me from this perverse generation among whom I drag on a life of oppression and servitude, devoting myself day and night to the care of preserving that noble woman to God and the

Church, my Mother, by whom she has been confided to me, and I hope to gain for myself a great reward from God for having thus kept her who wasted not her riches but has laid up for herself inexhaustible treasures in Heaven, being always ready to give up not only her worldly goods for the defence of justice but to shed her blood for thy confusion and the glory of the Church until such time as God shall deliver His enemy into the hands of a woman."

From Lucca, Henry, now more hopeful of success, again proceeded southward to Florence, which a few months previously had been forced to receive him within its walls. But, warned by past events, the citizens remained faithful to Matilda and, closing their ears to all the monarch's promises and threats, kept their gates securely closed and guarded. In a passion at this rebuff he marched upon the various cities and towns belonging to his cousin, and which, during his investment of Rome, had somewhat recovered from the effects of his late occupation.

It has been remarked that some people never know when they are beaten. Certain it is that the Tuscans failed to realise that they had been vanquished, and Henry had his work of conquering to do all over again. But now the tide of war, which had wafted him to victory, seemed against him and robbed him somewhat of the confidence with which he had entered on his campaign. Matilda's subjects had had time to prepare against a second invasion, and their loyalty and love for the Countess were too firmly rooted to allow of lightly yielding her possessions to a foreign foe.

# Matilda, Countess of Tuscany

## CHAPTER X

"Shall show her clothed with strength and skill
All martial duties to fulfil,
Firm as a rock in stationary fight,
In motion rapid as the lightning's gleam;
Fierce as a floodgate bursting in the night
To rouse the wicked from their giddy dream—
Woe, woe to all that face her in the field
Appall'd she may not be, and cannot yield."

WORDSWORTH.

WEARIED of his ineffectual attempts to draw his cousin within his power, Henry determined to concentrate all his attention upon the investment of Rome. To this end he recruited fresh troops and supplies from Lombardy, and, carrying the timid, unwilling Queen in his train, he once again turned his arms upon the Capitol, resolved at all risks to force an entrance.

Within the walls there prevailed a calmness which almost amounted to indifference. The citizens, trusting to the presence of the Holy Father and to the thoroughness of their defences, had no fear as to the results of the siege. They conducted the business and pleasures of life in their usual gay manner, and their spirits were not damped by any serious misgivings. Not even the foreign powers considered the Pontiff to be in any immediate danger, and Matilda was the only ally upon whose support Gregory could rely.[1]

But matters were assuming a very serious aspect and a crisis was rapidly approaching, the result of which was to prove so disastrous to Roman freedom and the liberty of the Church. Gregory, with a presentiment which his situation

[1] "Sola resistit ei Mathildis filia Petri."—DONIZO.

rendered prophetic, alone realised that his reign had ended and that an era of tyranny and impiety was about to commence.

"With the noise of battle around him, and with the enemy thundering at the gates," he held his tenth and last Council in the City of the Apostle, and for the last time occupied the Chair of St Peter.

The Synod was not, as was usually the case, numerously attended, for only those ecclesiastics who had remained in the Capitol during the siege were able to be present. Anselm of Lucca, and other Bishops who were not in Rome at the time, were unable to form part of the Council, since between them and the City lay the German encampment.

As the Pontiff passed through the lane of anxious and timid prelates who lined the audience hall, his spare and attenuated form was drawn up to its full height as with a dignified gesture he returned their respectful greetings.

The air was laden with a suppressed murmur of intense and universal excitement as the Holy Father took his seat on the throne and allowed his eyes, which still retained their penetrating power, to wander, as if in mute farewell, over the familiar, upturned faces of the Italian nobles and prelates.

He who had, as Vicar of Christ on earth, the most to fear appeared to be unmoved and unconscious of the black and ominous clouds which were darkening the horizon and filling all hearts with dread. His was not, as the audience was aware, the indifference of age nor that natural tranquil and collected temperament which, like a placid lake, reflects nothing but peace upon its even surface. His mental anxiety was hidden by a veil of silence through which the most curious of observers found it impossible to penetrate, and which inspired a greater confidence than any words could have conveyed. "He rested upon the anchor which God had placed in his heart at the moment when all the universe was risen against him. Such a man was the marvel of his age."

There was one amongst that assembly who was not deceived by the Pontiff's unruffled demeanour. That was "the daughter of the Church," who had been permitted glimpses of the agony of apprehension under which he laboured at being compelled to resign the helm of Saint Peter's bark to impious and unhallowed hands. Matilda occupied a seat among the noble laity, and the attention of the whole Synod was attracted by her tall, stately form and her beautiful face, which emotion had flushed with a warmer tint than usually rested there. No one would have guessed from the serenity of her demeanour and the still repose of her classical features, that all her earthly interests were at stake, nor that at that very moment her heart was torn with anguish for the sorrows of her poor stricken people. Many sad recollections of the last Council which she had attended crowded into her memory. Then her mother had been at her side, and the Countess recalled to mind that it was Henry's sentence of excommunication that had hastened the death of the fondest of parents. A flood of righteous anger surged through her brain against the originator of all her misfortunes and the cause of so much scandal to the Christian world. Never while life and strength remained would she yield her Church and her country to his arrogance, and the look of stern resolve which settled upon her countenance was a fitting index of the bitter thoughts within.

As the eyes of the Pontiff swept the assembly they fell with softened gaze upon the form "so unconsciously mournful in its beauty." He seemed to divine her thoughts, and by a glance conveyed comfort to her aching heart.

The deliberation of the Council was long and stormy, the attention of the assembly being as vacillating as the waves of the sea under the influence of contrary winds. Clergy and laity regarded each other with looks from which they endeavoured in vain to conceal their anxiety, and, but for the restraining presence of the Pope, their debates would have had a tumultuous ending.

Gregory, whose invincible mind swayed the unstable wills of those present, alone maintained throughout his unbroken composure. He kept before them the matters for discussion and arranged the business connected with the Government with as much deliberation as if there were no conflicting interests to interfere with its development. Regardless of the dangers which threatened him, "from his throne he issued decrees which were to bind Christendom with as much firmness as when in the zenith of his power." [1]

"I have," said he to the Romans who desired peace and reconciliation, "often had experience of the falseness and the unhappy perfidy of the King, but even now, if he wishes to repair all the evil which he has done to God and to the Church, I will willingly absolve him and give to him the imperial crown with my benediction, otherwise I cannot and I ought not to hear you."

Occupied as most of the Council were with their own disquieting thoughts, they could not fail to be touched by the self-possession and courage of the frail, gentle old man before them. Ashamed of the personal fears which had taken hold of them, they conquered their feelings of self-interest and listened with breathless attention to every syllable which fell from the lips of the venerable Pontiff as he delivered his last charge. "Rising in the midst of the assembly, as if animated with superhuman strength, he spoke of faith, of Christian morality, of courage, and of constancy necessary in the present persecution, with an eloquence so lively and so touching that tears fell from all present." [2] "His powerful and pathetic words held the assembly captive. His discourses were rather those of an angel than those of a man." [3] "He spoke," says yet another biographer, "of the light affliction, and of the eternal reward of martyrs for the faith.

[1] Sir James Stephen's *Ecclesiastical History*.
[2] Voigt.
[3] "Ore non humano sed angelico."

He spoke as dying fathers speak to their children of peace, and hope, and consolation."

At the end of his address the Pontiff solemnly blessed and dismissed the assembly, and then prepared with saintly fortitude to bear with resignation whatever extremity of danger or distress awaited him. His courage was ere long put to a crucial test, and the Church has signalised his glorious victory by including his name in the ever-lengthening list of the martyrs who have cheerfully died in her defence.

Scarcely had the Holy Father reached his private chapel and thrown himself on his knees before the altar, scarcely had the last retreating footsteps of the assembly died away in the distance, than the threatening storm burst in all its fury upon the Vicar of Christ and upon the flock committed to his faithful charge. Even while Gregory was preparing himself to receive the martyr's crown, the city gates were opened by traitorous hands to admit the German troops.

A strong contrast to the peace which reigned within the breast of the Pontiff was afforded by the tumultuous feelings which agitated the King. Stung to fury by the repeated failure of his attempts to enter Rome, "he resolved to obtain by bribery what force was unable to effect." By the sacrifice of large quantities of gold his emissaries succeeded at last in corrupting the fidelity of the inhabitants, and traitors were ready for reward to open the gates at a given signal.

While Henry silently and stealthily passed within the city, a few of his followers sought a more honourable method of gaining admittance. Making a determined assault upon an unprotected point of the wall, they forced their way through the breach, and by the suddenness of their entry and their undaunted bravery they paralysed the efforts of the citizens to take them prisoners or to repel their advance. The leader of these gallant sons of Mars was Godfrey de Bouillon, standard-bearer of the King, and the victor of the

field upon which Rudolph had fallen. He was the first to enter the "City of the Apostle," but so far from being proud of his exploit we learn that he bitterly repented the impious action, which in after years he expiated in Jerusalem.

Henry was in Rome at last! For two long years he had waited for this moment of triumph, and he was almost as insane with joy at the realisation of his schemes as he had formerly been with despair at their non-fulfilment. His resentment against Gregory had long ago destroyed any vestige of religion or generosity of soul. He was animated only with an eager vindictiveness to behold the downfall of the feeble Pontiff who had placed a restraining hand upon his folly and his pride.

In spite of the fact that the German army was decimated by disease and privation no opposition was offered by the Romans to the bold steadiness of their march into the city. On Holy Thursday, 21st March 1084, Godfrey de Bouillon planted the imperial standard upon the walls and the citizens silently submitted to the occupation of foreign and hostile troops.

In the meantime not a movement of Henry had escaped the notice of the watchful Matilda, who had foreseen the end of the siege. The Great Countess had not been idle during her lengthened stay in Rome. With her splendid powers of organisation she had, in the event of the King's entry, withdrawn her men to the Castle of Saint Angelo. This stronghold, which for a second time was to witness Gregory's humiliation, would be, Matilda conceived, a safe retreat for the Pontiff until further aid could be procured. With the forethought which provides for all emergencies, she had so arranged the stores of provisions and arms that in the probable event of an investment by the German troops the fortress would hold out for some months. Gregory's faithful friends, on being informed of the misfortune which had overtaken the city, begged him, with prayers and tears, to avail himself of the shelter thus provided for him. At length, but

only after great reluctance, he consented to their solicitations and quitted the throne for ever.

Henry's triumph received a check when, on arriving at the Vatican, he found the Pontiff had retreated to St Angelo, but he comforted himself with the assurance that his prey was within easy reach of his power. On the following day he left the Capitol to be plundered by his soldiers, who gladly embraced the opportunity of revenging themselves upon the taunting Italians. Proceeding to the camp the King conducted Guibert to the city, and placing him upon the Chair of the Apostles caused him to be acknowledged as Pope under the title of Clement III.

Henry, we are told, "had entered Rome without fighting on 21st March 1084, being the Thursday in Passion week. Next day he assembled the people, and presented to them as Sovereign Pontiff the Archbishop of Ravenna, Guibert. The following Sunday he had him solemnly consecrated in the Basilica of the Lateran by the Bishops of Modena, Arrezzo and Bologna, who took the place of those of Ostia and Albano, to whom belonged the privilege of giving consecration to the Popes-elect."

Matilda's work in Rome was for the present ended. She had, alas ! no power to prevent the acts of sacrilege which were being committed during the holy season which commemorates the rejection of the Divine Founder of the Church which Gregory represented. Nor could she, as she desired, drive from Rome the false shepherd to whom Henry, with impious hands, committed the sheep of Christ's fold. As soon, therefore, as she had assured herself of the Pontiff's safety she begged his blessing and made rapid preparations for her return to Tuscany. It was not a difficult matter for her to pass unnoticed through the streets, crowded as they were with the crestfallen Romans, who, in sullen silence, witnessed the triumph of their foes. There was no further need to guard the gates. Discipline was for the time everywhere relaxed, and Matilda with ease eluded the German

sentinels and set out with all speed to the relief of Florence.

Henry had no knowledge of her escape. While he was vainly storming at the gates of St Angelo the strategic Countess had crossed the Tiber and was on her way to prepare Canossa for a like fate.

Sad indeed was the homeward journey through what had once been thriving and prosperous villages. Plundered homes and devastated fields everywhere met her gaze and bore silent witness to the ditsress and poverty which had stricken her people to the earth. It was evident, from the ruinous state of affairs, that no revenues for the support of a new army could be gathered from her impoverished subjects. With a generosity which touched all hearts she not only refrained from asking for their contributions but from her own purse relieved their most pressing needs.

There was no time for delay, and she ruthlessly stripped herself of the treasures her palaces contained and which had escaped the rapacious Germans. She sacrificed her jewels and the family heirlooms, which were almost priceless in her eyes. Even the sacred gold and silver vessels used in the chapels and monasteries were taken to supply food and wages for the soldiers she was recruiting for the service of the Pope. With trembling fingers Donizo and the monks regretfully and with many sighs returned to the Countess the treasures with which she had endowed them and which she promised to return when the Sovereign Pontiff had no further need of them.

"Although," we are reminded, "the Pope was not willing that the riches of the Church should be sacrificed for his personal safety, Matilda did not scruple to disobey him in this respect." Bishop Anselm gave his blessing to her generous and pious offering of her riches, and placed in her hands for the service of the Vicar of Christ the gold chalice which he had used for so many years, and which had been the gift of the Countess in happier times.

Matilda's principal anxiety was lest St Angelo might succumb to bribery or some other form of treachery in which Henry was an adept.

The King himself was sanguine now of securing his prisoner. Strict watch was kept upon the castle, round which he forced the Romans to erect a continuous wall. There was, as Henry congratulated himself, no loophole of escape for the Pontiff, and deprived of Matilda's assistance it was but a question of time ere he fell into the hands of his relentless enemy.

But Heaven had decreed otherwise, and at this crisis of his fate help arrived for Gregory from an unexpected and powerful quarter.

At the time of Henry's investment of Rome, Robert Guisard was engaged in the East in driving the Saracens from the strongholds they had occupied for nearly two centuries. After a brilliant victory over the Byzantine forces, and while preparing to enter Constantinople, a courier came to his camp from Rome, conveying a letter from Gregory himself. The Pontiff, after referring to Robert's recent success in arms, concluded as follows:—"Be careful ever to keep before thine eyes St Peter, whose protection of thee is proved by these great events. Think, too, of thy Mother, the Holy Roman Church, who trusts to thee more than to any other prince, and above all think of Christ Remember what thou hast promised Him, a promise which, even if thou hadst not made it, would be impressed on thee by the rights of Christianity. But since thou hast made it, be not slow to fulfil it. Thou art not in ignorance of the tumult that is stirred up against the Church by Henry, falsely called King, nor how greatly she needs the help of thee who art her son. Stir then so that the more the son of iniquity fighteth against us, the more the Church may rejoice in the succour afforded to her by thy piety." "We fear," continues the Pope, "to attach to this our own leaden seal for fear the enemy may get possession of it and put it to some bad use."

[1] M. Abel François Villemain.

With his natural impetuosity, and scarcely allowing the messenger time for rest, Robert dismissed him on his return journey, bearing a reply to Gregory which was worded as follows:—

"To the Sovereign Pontiff.
"The Lord Robert, Duke by God's Grace.

"When I heard of the aggressions of the enemy I long refused to believe in the conviction that there was one who would dare raise his arm against thee. Who would attack such a father unless he were mad? . . . As to thee, I owe thee all fidelity, and will acquit myself of it when opportunity offers."

Nor were these mere protestations on Robert's part. He held a consultation in his tent with his son Boemond and the chief officers of his army, announcing his intention of going to the relief of the Pontiff. "We must," said the stalwart knight, with the chivalry for which he was renowned, "always obey the voice of God. I will obey the Pope's order and will return to you as soon as I can. Meantime, do not offer battle; do nothing to exasperate the people. I go to fulfil the duty to which the Lord calls me, and if I do not lose my life I shall be back before long."

The Council unanimously agreed that honour called their chief to proceed without delay to the relief of the Pontiff, and taking leave of his son he quitted the scene of his exploits and set out on his voyage.

At the appearance of Robert Guiscard in Italy all the country was moved; Normans, Apulians and Tuscans, eagerly flocked to enrol themselves under the standard of the soldier of the Church. The equipment and transport of his new allies were soon effected, and in a few days no less than thirty thousand foot and sixty thousand horse were at his disposal, eager to proceed to the defence of the Pope.

With his characteristic rapidity of movement he hurried

to Rome, and by a series of forced marches arrived just in time to save Gregory from falling into the hands of his enemies.

The unexpected advent of Guiscard placed Henry in a dangerous position. His troops, weakened by the long siege and disorganised by their excesses since the entry into Rome, were unfit to do battle with the redoubtable warriors, rumours of whose approach had reached him. He saw himself in imminent danger of being placed between two opposing forces. The Romans, daily growing bolder as the Normans advanced, and encouraged by their presence, might fall upon his men in the city and annihilate them ere they could reach the shelter of the camp. For once he listened to the dictates of prudence, and before the arrival of Robert he had withdrawn with his Queen and the anti-pope until he could recruit forces for an attack.

Scarcely had Henry retired when the Norman knight "appeared like a lion in the Christian capital of the world" and made a triumphal entry into the city. "He unfurled the standard of Saint Peter and marched forward with all his forces, followed by a pious and unarmed crowd, to Saint Angelo."

Although Henry's soldiers pillaged the city of the Cæsars, 'the Romans," remarks the historian, "found it no less serious to have to do with such unceremonious Christians as Robert Guiscard and his companions. The entire town was sacked, the ancient monuments and the palaces were fired. Gregory, from the break of day, from the height of the tower of St Angelo, saw how his liberators fulfilled their engagements with the Church. His soul, already sad, became sorely oppressed, and it was with difficulty he succeeded in saving some sacred temples."[1]

It was not long ere the walls with which Henry had invested the castle were demolished, the gates were thrown open, and the noble chief bowed his head and bent his knee

[1] Renée Amédée

in homage to the "visible Head of the Church." "With all due respect," continues the narrator, "Robert Guiscard conducted the Pope to the Lateran, and kneeling before him, in the midst of the mingled crowd of knights and priests, he presented pious offerings."

During his short stay in the Capitol Robert appears to have acted with great severity towards the citizens, whom he suspected of having admitted Henry, and "reduced to slavery a number of Romans who had betrayed the Pope."[1]

Henry, who in the meantime had drawn fresh volunteers from Lombardy, and received fresh supplies of food and money from Germany, was now ready to return to Rome and risk an encounter with the Normans.

This time it was Guiscard who, acting with a discretion very unusual in the hardy chief, refused to do battle or to stand the chances of a siege. Accustomed to contend with superior forces to his own, the Duke was not withheld from the conflict from any fear as to the ultimate issue. He had fulfilled his promise of rescuing Gregory, and when once he was assured of the Pontiff's safety he would be free to return to his encampment in the East.

It was evident, however, that Rome would no longer be a safe abode for the Holy Father. As soon as Guiscard withdrew his protecting arm there would be savage reprisals on the part of Henry that not all Matilda's devotion or heroism could keep in check. To receive him in her stronghold of Canossa would mean the fruitless destruction of Tuscany and the loss of her marquisate, for not even the stout hearts of her people could deliver them from the disciplined troops with which Henry could ravage her unhappy land.

Gregory himself realised that his presence in Rome would involve all Italy in strife with Germany, and much blood would be shed on either side. Even his own martyrdom, although he did not shrink from the sacrifice, would but add to the difficulties with which the Holy See, at that period of

[1] Joannes Voigt.

its history, was called upon to contend. After a consultation with Duke Robert, therefore, he decided to accept his offer of an asylum in Norman territory until a fitting opportunity occurred of returning to the Apostolic seat of authority.

To the faithful children of the Church it mattered little from what portion of the globe Gregory issued his decrees. "In the eyes of all Christendom he still remained Pontiff." From the shelter which Robert generously extended to him he could, without receding a step from his attitude with regard to the King, continue to keep in touch with all who loyally retained their allegiance to Saint Peter.

On the part of Gregory there was an utter absence of all apparent consciousness of defeat. His nobility of character, purified from all personal interests, allowed in him no room for feelings of chagrin or humiliation.

As he went through the gates with his friends and raised his hands in a farewell blessing over the city his soul was troubled at the thought of the perils to which his flock would be exposed without a shepherd to guide them.

More than sixty years had passed since the Pontiff, then a child of eight years, went into the Capitol with his parents, there to be dedicated to the Church he had since served so faithfully. More than sixty years since his eyes first gazed with awe at the palace of the Popes, in which he was one day to reign and from which he was now exiled for the cause of freedom and justice.

Guarded by Norman lances and accompanied "by his cardinals and clergy," Gregory went on his way, escorted by Matilda's knights as far as the Duke's feudal territory of Apulia. At every town and village on the route crowds of people came forth to beg the blessing of the weary Pontiff. He had travelled in and out amongst them for so many years that his revered form was familiar even to the humblest of the inhabitants, who came out to greet their pastor with tears and broken sobs of farewell. Guiscard rode by his side and we are told "paid to him, both as a friend and the Head of the

Church, the deferential respect of a son to a beloved parent."

Gregory had, however, one solace in his cup of affliction, and that was a visit to Monte Cassino. What private reason the Duke had for changing his plans is not stated, but the party had not long rested at Apulia when, by his orders, it again set out towards Naples on the way to Salerno. This divergence from the direct route brought them within easy distance of Monte Cassino, and Guiscard willingly assented to the Pontiff's proposition to pay a visit to the hospitable Benedictines. They remained for several days at the monastery, where the Pontiff "spent the time in prayer and reflection and left his burden of anxiety at the foot of the cross." What a flood of recollection must have passed over the mind of the holy old man when he knelt, as he had so often longed to do, within the narrow limits of his cell and, forgetting all else, held sweet communion with his God.

The journey to Salerno was Gregory's last on earth. His frame, naturally delicate, was much tried by the fatigue caused by the continuous jolting over uneven roads and the many discomforts which in those days inevitably attended travellers. The Normans, in their jovial but unrefined manner, did their best to relieve the tedium of the way, but Gregory's sensitive nature, though appreciative of their kindness, was not in harmony with their well-meant endeavours to please him. It was a beautiful country through which they were riding, "rich in oranges, palms and vines," but it was a relief to them all when the Duke's Gothic castle loomed in sight and their eyes were gladdened by the waters of the lovely bay which it overlooked.

The fortress, which was strongly defended, was built by Guiscard himself upon a hill above the town, and the Pontiff agreed with him that no better asylum could be found than that which he generously offered. Guarded by his faithful though unceremonious children, Gregory was protected from any attack from Henry, nor could the machinations of that

wily monarch withdraw him from their safe keeping. The Duke, who had won a world-wide reputation for being "furious in his wrath and pitiless in his revenge," had made his arrangements with a wise precaution. He rightly deemed that the King was not likely to risk collision with the Normans by an attempt to lay hands on the Pontiff while he remained under the protection of their chief.

Guiscard conducted Gregory to the battlements of his future home, and, with pardonable pride, pointed out to him the town which lay at its feet and which, under the Normans, was rapidly becoming important. Among the buildings visible from the castle was the Gothic cathedral dedicated to St Matthew which Robert had erected and which he begged the Pope to consecrate. This Gregory readily agreed to do, and it was beneath its lofty dome that the Holy Father found his last resting-place.

The Duke remained for some time with the exile, who was much gratified at the practical piety evinced by his host in the erection of churches and monasteries in his domains. Under the fostering care of the monks who established themselves in these buildings the study of the healing arts made considerable progress, and even in those days their school of medicine became renowned. It formed the nucleus, we learn, "of a medical university, one of the finest to be established in Europe, which was founded in Salerno just half a century after Gregory and Robert had passed away."

It is a remarkable coincidence that at the moment the old knight thus displayed his fidelity to the Church, Boemond, whom he had left in charge of his army, repulsed a determined attack of the Greeks with brilliant success. News of his son's danger and gallant achievement reached Guiscard, and aware of the value of time he became anxious to return to the scene of action and follow up the victory gained by his men. His duty done he became consumed by a feverish impatience to be with his army, which, in nightly

anticipation of being again assailed, awaited his advice and command.

Ere quitting Italy, Guiscard placed the Pontiff under the care of his Norman guards, who, with unswerving loyalty, would, he was assured, fulfil the behests of their chief and defend their sacred charge with their lives.

Both Gregory and Robert seemed to divine that the parting was final and that the warning words of counsel which fell from the Pontiff's lips were to be the last which the Duke would hear. The farewell scene was a most affecting one and moved the hearts of all present, for Guiscard was not ashamed of his emotion nor that his companions should witness his grief. He who bent the knee to on one else on earth now knelt humbly at the feet of the Holy Father to receive the last blessing with which he rewarded the faithful child of the Church in the name of her Divine Founder. The head of the haughty warrior, whitened by exposure to the eastern sun, was lowered to the earth as Gregory pronounced the solemn words of benediction. Rough soldier though he was, undaunted in battle and fierce in demeanour, the touch of the gentle, trembling hands conveyed a message of peace and love which awoke an answering echo in the war-seared soul of the Norman knight.

The incessant cares and anxieties of his pontificate, and the delinquency of the King of Germany, had undermined Gregory's strength in a greater degree than he had imagined. Scarcely had he become familiar with the change from the stately calm of the Vatican to the bustle of a military fortress, scarcely had the sculptured monuments and buildings of the Capitol given place to the beautiful bay which lay beneath him, than his solicitous friends detected a failure of his physical powers. After the Duke had taken his farewell, Gregory, to the dismay of the Normans, who felt responsible for his well-being, began gradually to decline. It soon became evident, even to the sanguine Matilda, who came to visit him in his retreat, that his sands of life were

nearly run. In spite of his increasing weakness of body his indomitable will remained unbroken. From his sick chamber he influenced the Christian world and sent letters of commendation or reproof to the European courts, and issued decrees with as much decision and authority as when at the zenith of his power he ruled from the chair of St Peter.

The Pontiff had, in spite of the prelate's advanced age, intended Anselm of Lucca as his successor, and to him he bequeathed his pontifical mitre. With the Church's welfare uppermost in his thoughts he had, when feeling the hand of death upon him, recommended that, failing Anselm, the Abbot of Monte Cassino or Cardinal Otto of Rheims might be nominated to succeed to the throne.

He had seen much of Abbot Desiderius, and from his learned conversation and holy life he believed him to be of all men the most likely to carry out the reforms he had laboured all his life to effect. He warned his Cardinals not to be swayed in their choice of a Pontiff by any motives of subservience to faction, but that if possible they should elect from those whom he had recommended to their notice. "In the name of God Almighty and in virtue of the authority of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul," continued Gregory, "I forbid you to recognise any person for legitimate Pope who has not been elected and ordained according to the holy canons and the authority of the Apostles." "The Cardinals," remarks an eminent and learned Cardinal of our own day, "are not angels but men subject to the usual infirmities of flesh and blood. And because they are not exempt from the frailties incident to mankind, and because of the peerless dignity of the Supreme Pontificate, as well as of the tremendous responsibility it involves, every precaution that human ingenuity could suggest has been availed of in this (1903) as in preceding conclaves so that no cloud should rest over the election of the successful candidate." [1]

[1] Speech delivered by His Eminence, Cardinal Gibbons, at Baltimore Cathedral, 1903, on the election of Pius X.

While Gregory, in exile and "sick unto death," was thus upholding the exclusive right of the Church to the election of her Pontiffs, Guibert remained in undisputed possession of the throne. He, however, felt his position to be a less enviable one than he had anticipated. His conscience was troubled and reminded him that he was an intruder on holy ground. Even at the very height of his presumption he hesitated to assume the papal right of presiding at councils and deciding doctrines of faith with the infallibility which is alone claimed by the Vicars of Christ. His temporal power was maintained solely by the imperial troops, and his title remained unrecognised by every court of Europe save that of Germany. With the exception of the simoniacal Bishops attached to Henry's cause, the allegiance and filial respect of the whole Catholic world were retained by Gregory until his death, when they were transferred to his successor.

To Henry, whose impious hands longed to grasp the imperial sceptre, but who could not "by the laws and customs" do so until he had been crowned by the Pope, the induction of Guibert seemed an opportune moment for the attainment of his wish. Gregory had repeatedly refused to perform the ceremony, in consequence of Henry's evident unworthiness to hold so responsible and honourable a position. But now the voice of the Church was hushed, and there was none to say "nay." Worn out with grief, fatigue and infirmities, the Pontiff lay upon his death-bed. The body which he had so sparingly nourished had become too frail a tenement to contain his intrepid spirit. The way was clear and the monarch embraced the opportunity that might never occur again of being crowned in the Eternal City as "the leader of armies," which the imperial title signifies.

For the first time Henry publicly acknowledged his wife worthy of sharing his honours, and although the pious Bertha shrank with horror from assisting in the sacrilegious

ceremony she could not refuse to take her place as the King's consort.[1]

A procession was formed consisting of the German King and Queen, the anti-pope, the obsequious Bishops who were about to perform the ceremony, and other partizans of Henry's cause, principally excommunicated schismatics, together with clergy and laity from Lombardy, who were also under the ban of the Church. The presence of the imperial guard alone restrained a rising of the Roman populace, who witnessed the King's coronation in dead silence—the silence of despair broken only by the hoarse cries of the exultant Germans.

The King, who eight years before, at Canossa, had refused to take falsely the ancient test of the Holy Eucharist, had now become "so steeped in crime" that he had no hesitation in perjuring himself by assenting to the oath prescribed to all Emperors since the crowning of Charlemagne. The following account of the coronation of Carlo Magnus affords a strong contrast to that of Henry, with no pope to bless in the name of Heaven the wearer of the imperial crown, and with no joyful acclamations of the multitudes to greet the ears of the new Emperor. "On Christmas day 800 Leo anointed and crowned Charlemagne Emperor of the Romans, and Charlemagne, abandoning the title of Patrician, received that of Emperor and Augustus. While he was at prayer at the confessional of Saint Peter, the Pope, accompanied by the Bishops, priests and French and Roman lords, approached him and placed upon his head a golden crown, and all the people exclaimed, 'Victory and long life to Charles, the most pious Augustus, great and pacific, whom God crowneth.'

[1] "Henry was so far conqueror that the gates of Rome were delivered up to him, and he was consecrated in the Lateran church by the anti-pope, Clement III., his former chancellor, elevated to the tiara by his transient gleam of success after Gregory's flight to Salerno. Bertha received the imperial diadem at the same time, and Henry then fixed his residence in the ancient capital of Augustus and Charlemagne as their lawful successor."—Gibbon.

The Pope then anointed Charlemagne with holy oil. All authors agree in saying that he then pronounced the oath taken by his successors."[1] "I, Emperor, promise, in the name of Jesus Christ, before God, and the apostle Saint Peter, that I will protect and defend the Holy Roman Church against all as far as God gives me strength and power." This solemn declaration concluded with the following appeal to Divine Justice: "So may God and these Holy Gospels help me."[2]

The crown was in Henry's possession at last, though, as a Protestant historian severely comments, "Its wearer could no more, with the same lofty confidence, claim to be the highest power on earth created by and answerable to God alone." Nor was his triumph as complete as he had expected it to be. The Pontiff whom he sought to humiliate was mercifully spared the knowledge of this last outrage upon the rights and dignity of the Church. "He was too near his end to bear such a blow with impunity, and his friends very wisely kept public events from him."

The King, to give him his correct title, seems to have been troubled by no scruples of conscience, or if he were, he stifled them within his breast. From the date of his coronation by Guibert he assumed, but in empty form, the imperial dignity. His feverish longing to wear the diadem shows, remarks the historian, "the anxiety with which the Emperors wished to be regarded as the successors of Augustus."

Although the title of Emperor is generally accorded to Henry by historians, there is no mention of his having received congratulations on his coronation from any of his contemporary European sovereigns.

The triumph he had achieved in Rome made him desirous

[1] The Chevalier D'Artaud de Montor.

[2] This form of oath is still retained in English courts of law, and is assented to by the witness kissing the Gospels upon which he has sworn.

to secure a permanent establishment of his authority in Italy. There remained but one obstacle in his path, and this he decided to remove for ever. His hatred for his cousin had now become so fanatical that the war resolved itself into a personal struggle, which he determined was to end only by her death or subjugation.

He returned to Germany after the mockery of the coronation ceremony, and almost immediately on his arrival sent forward the main body of his army into Tuscany. His aim and object was to take Matilda by surprise, and by the superior equipment and numbers of his troops to overwhelm her patriotic band and exterminate her power and influence.

The "Great Countess," either unaware of the King's designs against herself, or feeling unable to frustrate them, was at the moment fully occupied in ministering to the needs of the widows and orphans of the victims of his former incursions into Tuscany.

For her people's sake she trembled at the very idea of another war with all its attendant calamities, and, but for her inborn patriotism, would like a reed have bowed her head to the coming storm. But the faithful heart which had given its most sacred treasures for the cause of freedom, could not entertain the prospect of submission to a foreign yoke. She determined, therefore, to maintain a vigilant watch upon the boundaries which formed a natural safeguard of the lands of her forefathers, and to adopt a policy of defence in the event of a sudden invasion.

In the midst of the cares of Government her thoughts were ever turning towards the sick Pontiff, and whenever it was possible she braved the long tiresome journey to Salerno and paid rare but precious visits to the venerable exile.

To Gregory her sympathy and child-like devotion were sources of much consolation, and it was to this faithful daughter of the Church that he addressed his last written words of blessing. "I have you in the midst of my ex-

tremity," said he, "that does not astonish me, for if I am loved of you as I love you, nobody passes before me in your heart."

While Henry, elated with pride at the successful termination of his campaign, pursued his homeward journey, Matilda was a prey to constant anxiety for the Pope's safety. She had instinctive dread lest the monarch, intoxicated with his power, should march southward to Salerno and lay violent hands upon the exiled Gregory. She hurried thither with a few chosen men-at-arms to reinforce the Normans, and if need be to shed her blood in defence of the Holy Father. Happily, her fears were groundless, and Henry passed on his way without making the least sign of hostile movement.

The princess, however, was well aware that his intentions were not as pacific as he would have them appear; the calm was too treacherous to last, its deceitful silence was but the prelude to the gathering storm. There had been no reconciliation between the cousins, and Matilda knew that she had offended the wrathful King too deeply to suppose he would thus easily forgive her spirited defence of Gregory. She lost no time in vain conjectures, but "with combined judgment, discretion and energy" she prepared with all conceivable foresight for the hostile attack by which she anticipated Henry would follow up his late success. Although Matilda had received no intelligence of his projected invasion she did not on that account lessen her precautions against such a contingency.

Her powers of organisation were well tested during the few months which followed Henry's entry into Rome. She prepared her towns and cities for prolonged sieges, and protected her outlying hamlets by arming the inhabitants in readiness for sudden surprises. She increased the numbers of her troops, and her knights and squires endeavoured to instruct the new recruits in the art and tactics of war. Messengers were dispatched to the length and breadth of the marquisate, calling upon the people, by their patriotism and

loyalty, to rally round the flag of Saint Peter. Sentinels were posted in guard over the mountain passes and defiles, and into the faithful keeping of her subjects she delivered her northern fortresses.

Matilda knew that in the absence of any organised training an encounter in the field could only end in a disastrous defeat for her loyal band. There was no other means of defence against the enemy except by taking them unawares, and though she could not face them in battle array, she "might easily overcome them as a flying host." Recalling to memory the success of her midnight sortie from Canossa she resolved, if the opportunity offered, to repeat the manœuvre.

Nor had she long to wait ere putting her tactics into execution. Onward, without any warning of its approach, came the imperial army, emboldened by the former achievements of their comrades, and confident of an easy and fruitful victory. To their astonishment there appeared to be no sign of human life in pass or defile; the solitude of the mountains was oppressive and weighed upon their spirits. They dreaded a treacherous ambush, and were cautious in their advance lest they should be caught in a trap by the intriguing Italians. No bar, however, was made to their progress, and their fears were dissipated as they descended upon the open plains. Without obtaining sight of a single Tuscan the soldiers erected their tents and made preparations for their first night's encampment. Ere long the bustle and activity gave way to silence and, fatigued with their toilsome journey, the men were soon sunk in sleep, without any misgivings as to their personal safety.

The mountaineers, warned of the coming danger, had, though unseen by the Germans, kept strict watch on the heights, from whence they commanded a view of what was passing in the valleys below. The very children volunteered as sentinels to guard their homes from surprise, and their sharp gaze was on the alert to detect the presence of the foe. The sight of a stranger threw them into excitement as

heralding the advance of an army and sent them speeding with the swiftness of deer to communicate their terror to their relatives.

Aided by these unrelaxing efforts of her devoted people, and with unbounded confidence in the protection of Heaven, Matilda concentrated all the energies of her mind in the furtherance of plans for the protection of her marquisate. Following the example of her ancestors, who had stamped their impress of courage upon this valiant daughter of their warlike race, she resolved by every effort to resist any attempt to wrest from her the smallest portion of her lawful heritage.

The Countess and her trusty band awaited with throbbing hearts for tidings of the advent of the Germans. Well they knew that a victory at the outset would postpone, if not altogether prevent, the scourge of internal war. The tension and suspense upon the nerves of the men as the sound of the heavy march of their foes was borne upon the air towards their strained sense of hearing was almost unbearable. With the thoughtlessness of youth many of their number could scarcely be restrained from rash and frenzied movements which would have betrayed their presence and frustrated Matilda's plans for their safety. At her whispered order a few of her followers, whose discretion she trusted, ventured to creep cautiously towards the German camp. The news they brought on their return filled the Countess with confidence of success. The spies reported that "the outposts were guarded with negligence," and this omission of military duty augured well for the favourable termination of their enterprise.

In the dead of night, while the troops were dreaming of home or of the rich plunder they would find in the palaces of the Countess wherewith to deck the comely figures of their brides, they were suddenly awakened to the realities of life, and for some that was their last fitful sleep.

Meanwhile, headed by the Countess, who had enjoined her men to observe the strictest silence, the Tuscans slowly wended their way from the heights by intricate paths known

only to themselves, and the existence of which was unsuspected by the foe. Ready to meet with patriotic courage whatever by the chances of war lay before them, they, at a given signal, swooped down upon the camp with the suddenness and precision of eagles. Matilda's war-cry of "Saint Peter fight for us!" rang out in the still air, and, says Donizo, "the terrible name of the Apostle awoke the slumbering soldiers," who were surrounded ere they could rally. The unusual darkness of the night, their ignorance of their position and of the numbers of the assailants, caused a confusion which, ere long, ended in a panic among the terror-stricken men.

From all sides of the camp resounded loud shouts of "Saint Peter!" "Saint Peter and Matilda!" mingled with the curses and cries of the wounded Germans. In vain the imperial officers endeavoured to restore discipline. It was impossible in the mist to distinguish between friend and foe. Each soldier sought to save himself by flight, and in trying to cut a passage through the *mêlée* fought indiscriminately with those nearest to him who hindered his escape. In this way the fugitives more often hurt their own countrymen than the Tuscans, who, by Matilda's stringent orders, kept as close as possible to her and to each other throughout the encounter.

The struggle, though sharp, was from the first too unequal to be of long duration, and Matilda's victory was complete and decisive. The Germans, with all possible speed, made good a precipitous retreat from the scene of their discomfiture, and "in a few hours one saw nothing of the enemy but corpses and luggage."

The dawn, which in Italy breaks with startling suddenness, unfolded to Matilda's saddened gaze the terrible results of the night's conflict. Her bosom heaved with sympathetic emotion, which the sight of the dead and wounded soldiers caused her, as with faltering accents she gave instructions for their careful removal.

In spite, however, of the horror with which the spectacle

inspired her, she could not but feel a sense of satisfaction at the success of the attack which had saved her country from German occupation. To her great joy she ascertained that her victory was achieved without the death of any of her followers, though many had been wounded by the escaping foe. The losses on the German side were more severe, "the Commander was killed, and six officers and a hundred men, including several Lombard nobles of distinction," were taken prisoners. Over four hundred horses, besides tents, forage, money and accoutrements fell into the possession of the Countess. The fugitives had no time to collect their personal property, and the entire camp remained at the mercy of the Tuscans. Matilda gave her men permission to share the spoils among themselves, to be regarded as souvenirs of their bravery and of the mercy of Heaven. The prisoners were set at liberty on giving a promise never again to take up arms against their generous captor, a promise which, alas! was soon disregarded.

"The glory, the prudence, the firm spirit of Matilda caused admiration even among her enemies," sings the poet, "the Great Countess is the dread of all."

With a few words of praise the princess dismissed her followers, and without giving herself time to recover from the after-effects of the battle, she pursued her way through the early dawn towards Salerno. Had she not been endowed with wonderful self-restraining power she must have succumbed to the anxieties which at this time daily oppressed her soul. But her personal emotions had so little sway over her that the perils and difficulties from which she had lately emerged, and which would have prostrated most women, seemed to a careless observer to pass over her without leaving a trace.

Through the early hours of morning, under the heat of the mid-day sun, whose rays in turn gave place to the clear moonlight, through untold discomforts and hidden dangers rode the princess. No rest did she allow her wearied frame

until the towers of the castle in which Gregory lay dying appeared in view. Her journey was now nearly ended, and perchance the sad and noble heart would gladly have hailed it as her last. The errand which had brought her thither was a solemn leave-taking of the Holy Father. Never more would the saintly Pontiff greet her as of yore with words of healing comfort and blessing. Never more would she hear the sweet counsels which, as they fell in softened accents from his lips, were for ever graven upon her heart and memory.

## CHAPTER XI

"The day is drawing to its close
And what good deeds since first it rose
Have I presented, Lord, to Thee,
As offerings of my ministry!
What wrongs repressed, what right maintained,
What struggle passed, what victory gained!
For Thine own purpose Thou hast sent
The strife and the discouragement."

*The Golden Legend.*

As if Heaven had reserved for Matilda one ray of comfort in her hour of sorrow, she found Gregory still alive although she was but just in time to bid him farewell.

Kneeling at his side she bowed her head in inexpressible grief as, with uplifted hand, the Pontiff bestowed upon her the last blessing he would give upon earth. In a faint and weary voice the dying exile besought Heaven to confer upon his staunch ally "pardon for her faults and benediction for her merits."

The Holy Father then received the Viaticum at the hands of Hugo of Cluny, who had braved the long journey in order to embrace his friend ere they should be re-united in heaven. "His faltering lips had closed on the transubstantial elements." The final unction had given assurance that the body so soon to be committed to the dust would rise again in honour and incorruption. Anxious to catch the last accents of that once oracular voice, the mourners were bending over him when he breathed out his spirit, exclaiming, "We have loved justice and hated iniquity, and for this we die in exile."[1] "Nay, Holy Father," replied Hugo, "in exile thou

[1] *Essays on Ecclesiastical Biography.* Right Honourable Sir James Stephen.

canst not die, who as Vicar of Christ and His apostles hast received the nations for thine inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession." A smile illumined the features of the dying Pontiff. Probably the prophecy of his childhood was recalled to his mind by the words of the Abbot: "He shall have dominion from sea to sea." And in the light of futurity he realised that "though the man died the cause lived."

This was on 23rd May 1085, when Gregory was in the twelfth year of his pontificate and the seventy-third of his age. Alban Butler says of him, "He preserved a perfect tranquillity of soul, having his heart strongly fixed on God." "Even the enemies of Gregory," says a Protestant historian, "are obliged to confess that the ruling thought of the Pontiff, the independence of the Church, was indispensable for the propagation of religion, and the reformation of society, and to that end it was necessary to break the fetters which bound the Church to the State to the great detriment of religion. It was necessary for the Church to be an entirety, a unit in itself and by itself, a Divine institution, whose influence is salutary to all men, to be arrested by no prince of the world. The Church is God's society, of which no mortal can claim the goods or the privileges, and of which no prince can, without crime, usurp the jurisdiction. As there is but one God and one faith, so there is but one Church with one Head."[1] "The independence of the Church," continues the learned writer, who certainly had no leanings towards the faith which Gregory professed, "that is the great point round which grouped all his thoughts, all his writings, all his actions like luminous rays; she was the soul of all his operations."

Gregory himself, in one of his epistles, expresses the same thought. "We desire but one thing, that the impious repent and return to their creator. We have but one desire, that the Church, oppressed and overturned everywhere, resume her

[1] *Histoire du pape Gregoire VII. et son siècle.* Par J. Voigt.

ancient splendour and solidity. We have but one object, that God be glorified in us, and we with our brethren, even with those who persecute us, so that we may all merit to arrive at eternal life. Regain courage, then, conceive a lively hope, fix your gaze upon the standard of the eternal King where He says to us, 'In patience possess ye your souls.'"

Although Gregory had, as he mournfully observed, "died in exile," his labours had reaped a glorious harvest. He had amply fulfilled his mission and achieved the end for which for so many years he had toiled and suffered. The Church, animated by his example and zeal, henceforth asserted her right to freedom of action and boldly placed a restraining hand upon the arrogance which claimed the right of choosing and electing her Vicars.

Amidst the manifold cares and distractions inseparable from his pontificate, Gregory had rigidly maintained the rule of St Benedict, which enjoined the devotion of several hours a day to literary pursuits. By this regular and methodical use of his pen he was able, even during the pressing business of his government, to indite no less than ten Books of Epistles, together with two appendices, and of his letters, lengthy as most of them were, more than two hundred and seventy have been preserved. "His style is," remarks the critic, "agreeably to the characteristic of his mind, bold, vigorous and impressive." Throughout his writings, whether letters or theological treatises, there runs the same thought of tender solicitude for the Church of which he was the temporal head, and this thread, woven as it were into the very texture of his life, is traceable in all his Epistles. "That is why," continues the historian, "Gregory insisted so much on the submission of the Emperor to the decrees of the Church."[1]

The highest testimony to Gregory's genius is that borne in 1877 by His Holiness, Leo. XIII., who was at the time

[1] Voigt.

Cardinal Pecci, during a conversation on the character of the great Pontiff. "I honour him," said the Cardinal, "for the holiness and austerity of his life. His was a creative and constructive mind. Others, like St Peter Damian, saw and lamented the evils of the day. They fought courageously and perseveringly against simony in high places, and against immorality among the clergy. But Hildebrand, for he was not then Pope, saw deeper and more clearly into the causes from which these evils arose. To his penetrating eye the true cause appeared to be the slavery of the Church to lay influence. His eagle eye detected this blot, and through his influence the Pope in Council solemnly decreeed that henceforth and forever the choice of a successor to St Peter should rest in the College of Cardinals, the Bishops, Priests, Deacons and sub-Deacons of the Roman Church. For a thousand years the choice of a Pope had depended on the chances and circumstances of the hour. From that time forward it was placed in the hands of a responsible and competent authority." "The Church is to-day," continued the Cardinal, "what Hildebrand made it. Since the days of St Peter there is no hand whose work is so conspicuous in the constitution of the Church as that of Hildebrand."[1]

It was Gregory's practical Christianity which enabled him to gain the respect of such men as Robert Guiscard and rendered him "a power among his contemporaries, and the dread of evil-doers." Historians have remarked, as a revelation of his natural kindness of heart, that, living in an age when human life was held in little value, he allowed none to be put to death during his pontificate. Although he sternly and unflinchingly rebuked error he was ever tender to penitents, and personal affronts he never resented.

He was interred in Salerno beneath the dome of the Gothic cathedral founded by Robert Guiscard, and which,

[1] *Canossa*, edited by the Right Rev. Mgr. Gradwell, Domestic Prelate to His Holiness Leo XIII.

prior to the departure of the Duke from Italy, had been dedicated by the Pope to Saint Matthew.[1]

Nearly five hundred years later the body of Gregory was brought to the light of day. Dressed in his pontifical robes lay the warrior of the Church before whom kings had stood abashed and tyrants trembled, and to whom the poor and oppressed had never looked in vain. His body was, we learn, wonderfully preserved, and so little changed and "lifelike" were his features that he appeared to the beholders "as if merely asleep."

The Church, ever ready to honour the memory of her children who have endured tribulation on her behalf, has not forgotten the Holy Pontiff who suffered so much persecution to preserve her rights inviolate. In 1584, on the anniversary of his death, his name was enrolled in the list of saints by order of Pope Gregory XIII., who reigned at that time.

"All Italy," we are told, "was convulsed by the news of his death," but probably Matilda's subjects felt his loss more acutely than did the changeable Romans, who, after his departure, had quietly submitted to the rule of the anti-pope. In their homes, on the mountain-brow or in the sheltered valley, the Tuscan peasants lamented his loss. They spoke with bated breath of the Pontiff whose stern features relaxed at the approach of the humblest of his faithful flock, and they wept with true Italian abandonment as they called to mind the many instances of his kindly condescension and interest in their welfare.

To Robert Guiscard the tidings were overwhelming. "He shed tears and seemed as grieved," writes his contemporary, "as if he had lost his wife and his son. His sorrow for the Pope's death was great, because a firm friendship had united them. Never had either fallen back from the affection which they had pledged to each other."

[1] Nearly four centuries afterwards the remains of the unfortunate Margaret of Anjou, widow of Henry VI. of England, were deposited within this cathedral.

The old Norman knight did not long survive the Holy Father. He, whose seventy years had been for the most part spent in strife, died of an infectious fever soon after his revered Pontiff had passed away. The vessel which, in accordance with his request, was to bring the body of the Duke to Italy, encountered such a violent storm during the voyage that it was wrecked and it was with great difficulty that the coffin was secured. Robert was buried in Venosa in the church adjoining the monastery which he himself founded, and which, prior to his departure, he had begged Gregory to dedicate. "Surely no better resting-place could have been chosen for the pious warrior than this beneath the arches he had reared to the glory of God." "The celebrated Robert, Duke of Apulia, was," remarks his contemporary, the Greek Emperor Alexis, "renowned among his countrymen. He raised himself," continues the royal historian, "to the rank of Grand Duke from a simple cavalier and became sovereign of those of his warlike nation both in Sicily and Italy. Did not the standard of the German Emperor, of the Roman Pontiff,[1] nay, our own imperial banners, give way before him, until, equally a wily statesman and a brave warrior, he became the terror of Europe."[2]

To Robert and to his brother Roger, historians remind us, Italy owes a deep debt of gratitude, since it was by their efforts that Sicily was freed from the invading Saracens. "The island, thus delivered from its fierce foes, began to revive and flourished as a kingdom for nearly eight hundred years." The inborn discipline of the Normans, by its very contrast to the restless excitability which characterised the Italians, was an influence both widespread and beneficial. The spirit of chivalry which was awakening in Europe found a home in the valiant breasts of these daring sons of Mars. It was communicated by them to the people among whom they intermixed, and added a steady tenacity of will to their

[1] Leo IX.
[2] *Count Robert of Paris.* Sir Walter Scott.

versatility and gave them that consolidated firmness of which they stood in need.

In Tuscany death claimed yet another public character and again deprived Matilda of a friend and counsellor. This was Anselm, the aged and saintly Bishop of Lucca, who on Henry's occupation of that city had quitted his See and retired to the friendly shelter of Canossa. Donizo gladly hailed the presence of the prelate within the walls of the fortress. The poet found much to admire in him, and to his pen we are indebted for the following description of the future saint, "by whose unwearied hand the library of Matilda was multiplied. He rarely slept in a bed. Often he wrote all night, and when he met with a new book he read it with avidity." He was at this time over eighty years of age, but his mind was unimpaired and his pen remained indefatigable to the end. In one of his works he disproves the right of temporal powers "to give pastors to the Church," and vindicates the policy of Gregory. He had taken that Pontiff, though considerably his junior in years, as his model, and was "his right arm in ecclesiastical affairs in Lombardy." In another epistle he confutes the pretensions of the anti-pope, and argues "that temporal princes cannot dispose of the revenues of the Church."

The misfortunes which had fallen upon the Holy See through the king had weighed heavily upon the Bishop and brought to a rapid decline "a life which had drifted unconsciously into old age." Under the filial care of the afflicted Countess he passed away not many months after Gregory had breathed his last, and just a quarter of a century before the decease of his countryman, namesake and fellow-saint Anselm of Aosta, Archbishop of Canterbury. He was engaged in writing a commentary on the Psalms when the welcome summons came that called the faithful soul to its eternal reward. With a sigh he yielded his gentle spirit just as his feeble hands had traced the last words of praise by which the Hebrew King, in a universal hymn of joy, rendered

grateful thanks to his Maker. "Thus," quaintly remarks the chronicler, "Matilda lost two men on whom she leaned and who leaned upon her," and both of whom are enrolled among the saints of God.

(1086.) We must, however, return to the narrative of events which followed the decease of Gregory. During the time which elapsed before the hesitating cardinals held their council the Bishop had passed away. His death left no choice to them but to conform to the wishes of Gregory and elect either Desiderius of Monte Cassino or Cardinal Otto of Rheims to the vacant throne. The state of affairs was, as the historian has remarked, "embarrassing.' But Matilda was equal to the situation. The Cardinals assembled at the instance of the Countess, and at their meeting she pressed the election of the Abbot." Her dislike of the Normans had long since given place to a genuine admiration for their bravery and piety, and during her visits to Gregory she had been much touched by their evident desire to relieve the tedium of his exile. She therefore promised to come to Salerno to be present at the enthronement, and also to aid the new Pontiff to recover the Chair of St. Peter.

The Pope-elect was, like his predecessor, a countryman of the Countess, and belonged to the illustrious family of the Counts of Marsi. He was born in the old Roman city of Benevento which had come into the occupation of the Normans and was held by them as a fief of the Church. Here he received the most finished education it was possible to obtain, and gave promise of being a most proficient scholar. Scion of a patrician race and son of a Roman prince, Desiderius was destined by birth and influence to grace the highest dignity in his native land. He had, however, no ambition to aspire to empty honours, and was of so amiable and gentle a disposition that it almost amounted to timidity. Even as a child nothing was more repugnant to his retiring nature than the ostentation and publicity which his rank and riches demanded of him. During his boyhood,

the prince, on his way to and from the monastic school, daily passed under the famous arch which bears witness to Trajan's triumph of arms. The citizens, to whom his tall, slight figure was familiar, noted with knowing looks his upward glance at the battle-scenes depicted on the column, and many were the conjectures hazarded upon his future course of life. Popular feeling was in favour of a martial training, and a brilliant career was predicted for the young nobleman whose courtesy to his equals and kindly condescension to his inferiors had endeared him to his countrymen. But the sages were mistaken. As he went on his way, all unconscious of the criticisms upon his appearance and future, his thoughts were roaming in far more peaceful scenes than those depicted on the Porta Aurea. They were with the monks from whom he had just parted. He pictured them as they slowly filed through the cool cloisters to the respective cells where they would enter upon their meditation or study. His soul was filled with a great yearning for the calm solitude of religious life, where he could, undisturbed by the distractions of the world, devote himself to serious study and reflection. While yet a youth his father reluctantly gave his consent to the wish of his heir. Abandoning the care and comforts to which his rank and riches entitled him, Desiderius, with a joyful heart, hastened to be enrolled as a monk of St Benedict. Leo IX., during his pontificate, which ended in 1054, had paid a brief visit to Benevento, which city afterwards claimed him as its patron saint, and stayed at the convent in which Desiderius was living. He was so charmed with the manners of the young monk-prince that he created him Cardinal-deacon, and in 1059, the same year in which Gregory was created Cardinal-deacon, Desiderius was raised by Nicholas II. to the dignity of Cardinal-priest.

A fear haunted the recluse lest his new dignity should demand his residence in Rome, where his long-continued tranquillity of life would be broken by the cares appertaining to his responsible position in the Church. Desiderius

possessed in the highest degree the vocation for a religious life, and was in disposition and tastes essentially a monk. Beyond the precincts of the cloister there existed for him no happiness, and he considered all time as wasted that was not devoted to God. On the day after his receipt of the Cardinal's hat he proceeded to Monte Cassino and presented himself at the gate for admission to that celebrated monastery. Here he permanently took up his abode, and so edified the brethren by his assiduous attention to his religious duties that they unanimously elected him their Abbot, the thirty-seventh from the time of St Benedict, and he retained the title until his death.

Of delicate health, and already advanced in years at the time of Gregory's decease, Desiderius desired nothing more than to be allowed to remain undisturbed in the solitude he had chosen.

Such was the character of the man whom the Cardinals, mindful of Gregory's dying wish, proceeded, without any intimation of their intention, to elect to the government of the Church at a time when peril menaced her on every side. The period required that a Pope should be a man of inflexible will, able by the very force of his intellect to compel that deference and obedience which the Church demands of her children. The daily increasing pontifical burden necessitated an iron constitution to support its weight and to withstand the incessant strain upon nerve and attention which a constant vigilance exacted. "One is astonished," remarks an authority, "that Gregory should have nominated so feeble a Pope. He was limited as to choice. He had at first designed Anselm, who was a man of government, then the Cardinal Otto, who succeeded Victor. He had designed for third the Abbot of Monte Cassino, renowned for his sweetness and holiness."

Desiderius was fully aware of his physical and mental shortcomings, and begged the Cardinals with tears to choose a more capable Pontiff, and to excuse him from occupying a

post which he was unfitted by nature and inclination to fill. Finding tears were of no avail he reminded the Cardinals of the importance of the tiara being upheld at that critical moment by a more worthy representative of St Peter, and finally he absolutely refused to quit his monastery. The Cardinals, astonished and alarmed at this prolonged resistance to their wishes, were at their wits' end to find arguments by which to convince the Abbot of the dire necessity which existed for him to assert the prerogative with which their election had invested him. In the meantime the Church government remained without a Director, the flock without a shepherd. Fortunately affairs in Rome had, during the interregnum, assumed a more peaceful character. Guibert, the anti-pope, however, still retained the pontifical throne, but he took no part in public events, and his authority was only maintained by the presence of the German guard.

Henry's thirst for vengeance had been somewhat slaked by the exile of the Pontiff, and death having delivered his victim from further persecution, he turned his attention to home affairs, and by his oppression fanned the slumbering embers of revolt into a flame. The distracted Saxons took up arms, and so occupied his time in repressing their repeated risings that he had no leisure to revenge himself on Matilda for the signal defeat his army had suffered at her hands. "As if Heaven," piously remarks Donizo, "as compensation for depriving her of the venerated Pontiff and Guardian, had chosen the time of her affliction to answer her mother's prayer for peace, the demon of strife departed from the land. Thus the blessing of Gregory and Anselm descended upon entire Italy—at that moment Matilda was delivered from war."

"Repentant, ungrateful Lucca re-opened her doors to her sovereign, and made great joy at seeing her again." Once again the Great Countess was within the palace whose walls had echoed the sounds of her mother's voice, and where so many friends of whom Heaven had bereft her were wont to

meet. Never more would the slight form of Gregory occupy the seat of honour, never more would the venerable Anselm pore over with her the ancient MSS., the translation of which not only afforded them the student's pleasure, but also served to convey instruction to future ages. Many of the treasures of art and literature had been stolen or destroyed during the looting of Lucca by the Germans, but enough remained to remind her of happy days of which they were the souvenirs, and to be sources of comfort to her in the troubles which were to come. Like balm upon her wounded spirit in the midst of these hallowed associations was the realisation that the war was really ended and that the storm which threatened to engulf her had dispersed.

Relieved from the necessity of maintaining a standing army, the princess disbanded her men, whom she liberally rewarded for their services. But more than the gifts which they received did her faithful followers value the public acknowledgment she made of their efforts, and the thanks she gave them for the diligence with which they had discharged their several duties. The loyal Italians, delighted at the words of praise from the lips of their "Grande Comtessa," filled the air with their shouts, as with joyful steps and swelling hearts they turned homewards to recount their perilous adventures.

So quickly had the events of Henry's mad excursion to Canossa, and his subsequent intermittent attacks, followed each other that Matilda, occupied as she was with the defence of her country, could scarcely realise that more than nine years had passed since, by the death of her mother, the responsibilities of government had devolved upon her.

The incessant activity which had distinguished the Great Countess during the war was equally displayed by her in times of peace. She rode on horseback from town to town and halted at the meanest villages in order to administer to the needs of those who had been the principal sufferers by their loyal defence.

Well she knew the mighty power of personal help and commendation, and with a generous hand, but with strict impartiality of distribution, she mingled a wise prudence with her charity. By precept and gentle persuasion she discouraged even the humblest from eating the bread of idleness, and kept alive in them that spirit of independence which caused them in after years to be designated "the proud Tuscans."

Under her fostering care the country, which for years lay neglected, or downtrodden by the heedless soldiery, slowly recovered from the universal devastation. At first, it is true, the soil yielded but a scanty harvest as a reward for their pains. Ere long, however, the historian assures us, cultivated tracts of pasturage added a brilliant verdure to the plains. Vineyards crept up the slopes of the hills and mountains, or in terraces between the cascades which gambolled in the sun as they hastened to join the merry journey of the streams below. The olives no longer feared to raise their heads on high, and, responding to the careful attention bestowed upon them, yielded an abundant supply of fruit. With buoyant spirits and elastic step born of a sense of free security the mountaineers pursued their arduous calling with a zest that rendered them oblivious to the perils and privations by which they earned their daily bread. All Nature seemed to rejoice in the new-found peace. The earth brought forth its produce of fruit, oil and grain in such abundance that Matilda was able to look with appreciative gaze upon a happy peasantry and a rich and prosperous land.

But this cheerful animation did not unfortunately extend to all Italy. In Rome a veil of uncertainty prevailed and a general gloom hung over public affairs. Gregory had been dead nearly a year, and though a successor had been elected he made no sign of acceptance of his office. Guibert remained in strict seclusion at the palace, the citizens treating his presence with supreme indifference. Having no leader to organise an attack, they felt the uselessness of resistance and went about their daily employment or amusement with

anxious heart and clouded brow. Matilda, we are told, "wrote incessantly" to the timid and disheartened Pope-elect that it was a sacrilege to abandon the Chair of Saint Peter to profanation, and urging him at all costs to enter Rome. She even offered to march at the head of her army and place herself at his disposal. The very idea, however, of a possible struggle and consequent bloodshed was so repugnant to the mild Desiderius that he fell ill, and, as the historian severely remarks, "that was for some time a pretext for his inaction."

The Cardinals, weary of the conciliatory inducements which had proved so ineffectual in persuading him to accept the reins of government, were becoming restless. In sheer desperation they unanimously proposed to adopt more stringent means. Acting in concert they prepared by rigorous measures to secure his compliance with their desires.

A few days preceding the anniversary of Gregory's death they went in a body to the monastery and demanded an interview with the Abbot. Desiderius was not proof against their arguments, which were supplemented by theappeals of Matilda, who was present at the discussion, and "placing himself *en route* the Pope-elect gained Rome by sea."

On reaching the Capitol he found the Countess was already before the gates, which opened freely to admit the successor of Gregory. Matilda, fearing resistance, had "made herself mistress of the Tiber, she was at the same time the soul and the arm."

Desiderius finding he could no longer avert the ordeal, submitted passively to be clothed in his sacred vestments. But the Cardinals, fearing lest he should escape, kept him under guard as a prisoner until the day of his consecration. He was publicly crowned on Whitsunday, 24th May 1086, in the castle of St Angelo, his electors choosing for him the title of Victor III.

When the ceremony was concluded Matilda proposed to the new Pontiff to test the general feeling of the Romans by presenting to them their rightful sovereign. The idea was

readily adopted and immediately put into effect. A religious procession such as had not been seen for years in Rome, issued through the gates of St Angelo and, escorted by Matilda with her men-at-arms, boldly went forth into the streets of the Capitol. The Countess was correct in her estimation of the people's loyalty to the Holy See. The whole city was moved and the excitement was intense. Crowds poured forth from every quarter, all flocking to pay homage to the good old man whose holiness of life was well known to them. His fame for sanctity and learning had not been confined to Monte Cassino, and the streets were filled with a kneeling multitude who, with streaming eyes, besought his benediction.

News of the arrival and coronation of the Pontiff had reached St Peter's, and Guibert, who was of a tenacious disposition, was not inclined to retire from his point of vantage. Summoning the soldiers who had been left under his command by the King, he caused them to march to the church in which Victor and his friends were assembled.

Matilda's brave and trusty band were fully prepared for this emergency. With the help of the Romans they valiantly resisted the entrance of the foe, "a violent struggle ensued and blood flowed." During the combat the Countess, regardless of her own danger, never quitted the side of the Pontiff. Her sole thought was for his safety, and ordering her attendants to close round his sacred person she withdrew with him to the castle of St Angelo. Relieved from their precious charge, the Tuscans were free to act on their own responsibility. Filled with righteous anger at the sacrilegious conduct of their adversaries, they threw themselves furiously upon them, and not only drove their antagonists from the building but chased them through the streets of Rome until they reached the shelter of St Peter's. So severe was the chastisement which the irate Italians inflicted upon the unfortunate Germans that they never again ventured beyond the limits required for their personal guard of Guibert.

The Pontiff, thanks to Matilda, reached St Angelo in

safety, but his mind was much perturbed by what had taken place. To the danger from which he had been rescued he gave but a passing thought, but the contemplation of the difficulties of his position threatened almost to unhinge his reason. His authority and throne usurped by the excommunicated Bishop of Parma, he was Pope but in name. More and more he felt himself unequal to the task of steering the bark of St Peter in the troublous seas through which it was passing. His heart failed, his courage could no longer sustain him. When, on the fourth day of his entry into Rome, his Cardinals sought an audience they found the chamber empty.

Divesting himself of his pontifical vestments, and with them his responsibility, he had sought by precipitous flight to avoid the difficulties with which he felt himself unable to cope. Unnoticed by the municipal guard, who little suspected his personality in the Benedictine monk who passed through the city gates, he was quickly lost to view. In hourly apprehension of being pursued and overtaken by the active troops of Matilda, the fugitive Pope wended his way to his beloved Monte Cassino.

The monks, who at first scarcely recognised in the weary, dejected and travel-worn figure before them the venerable form of their Abbot, were struck dumb with astonishment and bewilderment. With awe and terror depicted upon their countenances, they conducted his trembling steps to his former apartments, and awaited with fearsome curiosity the narration of events which led to his sudden appearance in their midst.

Meanwhile, the Cardinals and the Countess, having somewhat recovered from the shock which Victor's flight had caused them, began to take counsel as to the means by which he could be induced to return to his duties. "They conjectured that there was but one hiding-place to which he was likely to retreat, and there they looked for him." Their surmises were correct, and in his Abbot's stall, quietly saying

his office and oblivious of all save his devotions, they found the successor of Gregory.

The bustle caused by the entrance of the unwelcome visitors awoke him from his contemplation and rudely brought his thoughts to things of earth. With a groan he recognised that he must yield to the inevitable, and after invoking Divine assistance in his extremity he arose from his knees. Turning towards the Cardinals, he begged so earnestly, and in such touching terms, that he might be allowed to remain for a few days in the monastery, that they had not the heart to refuse his request. They agreed with him that a short time spent in a spiritual preparation for his new sphere of life would not be lost for the Church, but would considerably strengthen him to act on her behalf. He also desired that he might perpetuate the happiest years of his life by retaining the title of Abbot, which he had borne for twenty-seven years.

The Cardinals, only too happy at having secured Victor's acceptance of his pontificate, were willing to promise anything he should ask at their hands, and readily complied with his modest demands. At the end of the week he was once again attired in the vestments which the prelates had brought with them, and which he resumed with the conviction that Heaven had chosen him to be the unworthy successor of St Peter.

Sadly he threw a farewell glance round the walls of the narrow cell where he had so often held sweet communion with his Lord. His tear-dimmed eyes rested upon the crucifix, and reminded by it of the lesson of self-abnegation set by his Divine Master, he prepared to steady his tottering steps to enter upon the stern path of public duty.

His first trial was the parting interview with the brethren who had grown old with him, and who clung about him and with sobs lamented his departure. He comforted them with the assurance that he would still remain their Abbot, and that he would retain the title as a souvenir of the happy

life he had spent among them. The monks derived great consolation from the interest which the Holy Father displayed in their welfare, and during his short reign they elected no one to take his place. They accompanied him for some distance, hanging upon every word which fell from his saintly lips, as once again, but this time with the intention of remaining, he passed on his return journey to Rome. Closely attended by the Cardinals, he repaired to St Angelo, where for some time he was kept under strict surveillance lest he should again attempt to elude his electors.

They need have had no fear. Victor was now fortified to bear with resignation the cares of government which the divine will decreed should rest upon his aged shoulders. He was resolved to do all that lay in his power to promote the glory and the well-being of the Church of which he was called upon to be the Head. He determined upon the line of action he intended to pursue, and was fully prepared to abide by the consequences.

Though timid, Victor was not weak, and after events proved that he was not deficient in physical courage, and when occasion demanded it was seen that he could display a patriotism equal to that of the Great Countess herself.

He had hardly reconciled himself to the performance of his onerous duties when news reached Rome which threw the city into a state of the wildest alarm. This was no less than a threatened invasion of the Saracens, who were preparing, according to report, to swoop down upon the Capitol in such vast multitudes that resistance would be unavailing. Feeble no longer when the Church was in danger and required its Head to have a firm grasp of the helm, Victor took the matter entirely into his own hands. To the astonishment of everybody, and probably of himself also, the venerable Pontiff displayed a military ardour that would have done credit to a younger man. Regardless of the presence of the anti-pope, and of the imperial forces, he ventured forth, unattended by his guards, into the streets of

Rome. With critical eye he inspected the means of defence which the city afforded, and made such extensive preparations to repel the invaders that he infused renewed courage into the despairing inhabitants.

Aware of the devotion of Matilda to the Holy See, he sent her timely warning of the attack and of the necessity for prompt action. Messengers were also dispatched to the other States to give intimation to their rulers of the impending danger to their religion and their lives.

With the voice of authority Victor summoned the nobles of the city and rulers of the various provinces, and in impassioned tones urged them to combine in an attack upon the Saracens ere they landed on the shores of Italy. He reminded them that if the invaders once gained a foothold it would be a difficult matter to dislodge them, and that even if they succeeded it would be at great loss of life and property. By meeting them on their own ground ere they had completed the preparations for their projected enterprise it was probable, nay, certain, concluded the hopeful Pontiff, that the Saracens would be altogether disabled from making the attempt. It was impossible to hold aloof from an adventure, the very boldness of which would, as the Holy Father assured them, ensure their success. All Italy was roused. Arms and men were quickly forthcoming, and from Tuscany especially recruits came swarming from mountain pass and fertile vale in defence of their fatherland.

Matilda's contingent, not a little elated by the victory over the imperial forces, was well to the fore, confident of success, and bearing aloft the banner which the Great Countess had provided, although we do not find that she accompanied the expedition.

Again and again had the Pontiff refused the offers of his friends to drive the anti-pope from Rome and to restore the Chair of St Peter to its rightful sovereign. He had passively submitted to the indignity of reigning without a throne rather than rouse the fiery Italians into shedding the blood

of the intruders, for he remembered with feelings of pain that the Germans also were children of the Church. But the Saracens were the enemies of religion and Victor felt he was not acting contrary to his principles when he blessed and sent forth his soldiers, in the name of Heaven, to resist the inundation of infidels which threatened to overwhelm Christianity by its immensity.

Nor were the Pope's sanguine expectations of victory disappointed. Crossing the Mediterranean, his army inflicted upon the Saracens "such a salutary lesson" that for years they did not venture to approach the Italian shores and remained quietly within their own boundaries.

In 1087, soon after despatching his forces against the Saracens, Victor left St Angelo to go on a visit to Benevento. Here in his native city, "where almost every other house is built out of the remains of Roman altars, monuments, columns and beams," he summoned his first and last Council. With a temerity of which he scarcely deemed himself capable he forbade his Bishops, under pain of excommunication, to accept or give to laymen the investiture of any ecclesiastical dignity. He also delivered a solemn address to the faithful, warning them not to receive the sacraments at the hands of heretics or simoniacs.

Even while giving utterance to the voice of the Church, Victor's reign drew to its close. The angel of death hovered above him, waiting to claim the Pontiff who, worn with years and continued ill-health, would soon fall an easy prey to his icy grasp. Finding his end was approaching, he begged his friends to convey him to Monte Cassino, where, in the calm solitude of his cell, he could prepare his soul to pass into the presence of its Creator. "Ready to die, he pointed out to the favour of the Cardinals those whom he esteemed worthy to succeed him."[1]

His wish was granted, and his attenuated form was carefully carried over the roads by which he had in his youth

[1] *Lives of the Popes.*

joyfully sped to join the brethren among whom he had now come to die. He had just strength to regain the friendly shelter of his beloved monastery when his aged frame succumbed to an attack of dysentery. Never was pilgrim more willing to arrive at the end of his journey than was Victor to quit this scene of strife in which his weary spirit could find no peace or rest. He died as he wished, among his brethren and solaced in his last hours by their prayers and loving ministrations. A calm of ineffable sweetness stole over him as the familiar voices of the monks chanting the psalms of the day were wafted through the cloisters to the cell in which he lay awaiting the angel of death. As the sounds came floating in sweet cadence to his listening ears, his lips parted in a smile and his childlike spirit passed from the reach of earthly music to the full harmony of the celestial choir.

"Distinguished for the sanctity of his life and the glory of his virtues," Victor's death ended a short but brilliant pontificate of fifteen months, of which he had worn the tiara scarcely four. "Monte Cassino," somewhat severely comments a critic, "lost in him a pious Abbot, the Church did not lose a Pope, it was the hour to find one."

Following the example of his predecessor, Victor did not, even when elevated to the Papal Chair, abandon the daily devotion of some hours to literary work. He left behind him, as proofs of his industry, several books of dialogues upon the miracles of St Benedict, and histories of other celebrated inmates of the monastery.

By no one was the late Pontiff more truly mourned than by the Countess of Tuscany. His gentleness and timidity appealed to the chivalrous spirit of this descendant of a line of warriors whose inherent piety recognised and acknowledged the saintliness for which he was celebrated. On hearing that he had passed to his eternal reward, Matilda sent courier after courier to warn the Cardinals of the danger of delay in their choice of a successor. She feared lest the

anti-pope would profit by the death of the Pontiff, and by some public act of authority give rise to serious complications in the election to the Papal Throne. She strongly advised them not to hold their Council within the city, and suggested that they should meet in the city of Terracina in the Roman province. We do not learn whether the Countess was present at the conclave, which was unanimous in its desire to fulfil the wish of Gregory by the election of his nominee.

The Papal Throne, so long occupied by Pontiffs of German or Italian nationality, was now to be filled, for the second time in the annals of the Church, by a Frenchman. This was Otto de Chatillon, the most brilliant of the eminent scholars who had received their tuition from St Bruno, the founder of the Carthusian Order.

He was first appointed Canon of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Rheims, of which city he subsequently became arch-deacon. Like his predecessors in the Chair of St Peter, he preferred monastic to public life. He early retired to the Benedictine monastery at Cluny, where for the twenty-eight years preceding his election he had been Abbot. Gregory, who held him in much esteem and "reposed unlimited confidence in his wisdom," had created him Bishop of Ostia, and sent him on an embassy to the German court. Henry treated the envoy as he would have treated the Pontiff himself had he been afforded an opportunity. On presenting himself at the palace with his credentials the legate was immediately arrested and conveyed to prison where, until his liberation, every insult and indignity was heaped upon him as the representative of the Holy Father.

Otto, who is described as a man of remarkable energy and decision of character, offered in every instance a striking contrast to his predecessor. "His courtly and princely bearing" rendered him popular with all classes of society, and in spite of his protestations to the contrary he was chosen as Pope by the unanimous votes of the Cardinals.

With a more ready compliance with the desires of his

electors than the late Pontiff had displayed, Otto took leave of the French monarch, and, followed by the cordial good wishes of his countrymen, repaired to Rome.

He was publicly crowned on 12th March 1088, taking as his namesake and model Pope Urban I., who was martyred early in the third century.

With the celerity of action peculiar to his nation, Urban, immediately on his coronation, convoked a Council. In emphatic terms he renewed the anathemas pronounced by Gregory against the anti-pope, the King and his partizans. "But," remarks the historian, "if Guibert was not made for Pope, he was made for Commander." In the name of the King he called upon Lombardy and those States friendly to Germany to aid him with men and money. Sending out his mercenaries in all directions, "he succeeded in agitating Tuscany in order to profit by the diversion."

Aware of the sacrifices which Matilda had made for the Holy See, Urban sent an envoy to acquaint her with his accession and to warn her of the proposed attack upon her territories. He marked his appreciation of her brilliant example by special assurances of his esteem and friendship. In a letter written with his own hand he declared his intention of following Gregory's footsteps and of adhering to his policy of upholding the claims of the Church. "What he rejected," continued the Pontiff, "I reject; what he condemned, I condemn; what he loved, I love also."

# Matilda, Countess of Tuscany

## CHAPTER XII

> "For she was rich and gave up all
> To break the iron bands
> Of those who waited in her hall
> And laboured in her lands.
> It is their prayers which never cease
> That clothe her with such grace;
> Their blessing is the light of peace
> That shines upon her face."
>
> LONGFELLOW.

IN imitating, as he had assured Matilda, the policy of Gregory, Urban had also emulated his magnanimity. Scarcely had the new Pontiff been crowned than he sent his Apostolic forgiveness to his countryman, the aged Berengarius, who had been excommunicated for denying the Real Presence and who now lay at the point of death. After leading a "miserable and despised life," the Bishop, who was more than eighty years old, had begged for the fourth and last time permission to abjure. Urban, without hesitation, granted his request and sent him messages of pardon and reconciliation with the Church. On the feast of the Epiphany the penitent died, with his last breath deploring the errors which he had promulgated. "To-day," said he, in a contrite voice, "being the day of His manifestation, my Lord Jesus Christ will appear to me, either, as I hope, to raise me to glory for my repentance, or, as I fear, to punish me for the heresy which I have been instrumental in spreading." The seeds of disbelief which he had so freely scattered during thirty years were unfortunately beyond recall and caused Urban and his successors many an hour of sorrow and anxiety. The pernicious weeds grew and flourished and

sent their fibrous roots deep into the minds of so-called "rational" Christians, who, like St Thomas, require material proof ere they believe. "We have but faith," sings the sweet poet of our own days, "we cannot know, for knowledge is of things we see." There have existed in all ages men who have failed to grasp the truth that where reason ends faith begins, and it is these feeble Christians who, stumbling along the uneven road of doubt, fall an easy prey to heresies.

The courage and zeal with which Urban entered upon his reign stood him in good stead, and were from the commencement subject to a prolonged and severe test that ended only with his life. Besides the eradication of the errors of Berengarius, the Pope had other troubles to contend with, and his task of overcoming the complications in which the affairs of the pontificate were involved seemed almost hopeless. Discords within the Church and enemies without hindered his plans of reform and added to the intricacy and the vastness of the difficulties which surrounded his throne. The simoniacs, under Guibert, openly trafficked in livings and boasted of their power, and it was not mere boasting, for history assures us that in Germany there were but four Bishops, "those of Wurtzberg, Passau, Worms and Constance, who were without taint." The Nicholaites, who were supported by Henry, brought shame and disgrace upon the sacred offices they held and "schisms and heresy were rife." Urban, in spite of his natural buoyancy of temperament and his ability to maintain the authority of the Church, began to get discouraged. He grew to mistrust his own powers and longed in his soul for some able counsellor who could assist him at the helm. Such a man he found in his late preceptor, the saintly founder of the Carthusians. Bruno was unwillingly compelled, at the command of the Pope, to leave his cell in the desert of Chartreuse to enter upon Court life and to become a prey to all the mental worries of a privy councillor. The holy hermit was, on his arrival in Rome,

welcomed with "every imaginable token of esteem and affection. He was assigned an apartment in the palace that he might be near at hand when his opinion was desired on weighty affairs of religion and conscience." But the monk's thoughts were far away, and though he assisted his former pupil to the best of his ability, it was evident that he was very unhappy in his own mind. The Pontiff, aware of the privileges Bruno would enjoy in Matilda's marquisate, offered him the See of Reggio, but the hermit begged so earnestly to be excused from accepting the preferment that Urban reluctantly yielded the point. In his despair of retaining such unwilling services, the Pontiff, to Bruno's joy, gave him permission to retire to his longed-for solitude, and henceforth ruled alone.

In a Council held at Amalfi in 1089, the year following Urban's accession, the questions relative to lay investitures were discussed, the statutes issued against them by former Popes were confirmed, and fresh and more rigorous laws were enacted for the suppression of the practice.

At the same Council, Urban, mindful of the valuable services rendered to the Pontiffs by the Guiscard family, performed on their behalf a gracious act of public acknowledgment. The successor of the brave Robert, who had proved himself so faithful in defence of the throne, was, in the presence of the Assembly, with due ceremonial, formally endowed with the Duchies of Apulia and Calabria.

While the Pope was carrying out the plans of his predecessors for the independence and supremacy of the Holy See, affairs in Tuscany were tending towards civil and religious progress.

Matilda's repeated stays in Rome during the pontificate of Victor had interrupted her plans for the reparation of the damage occasioned by the calamitous wars which preceded the death of Gregory, and which had swept like a whirlwind over the face of Italy. The emissaries of Henry, encouraged by the anti-pope, had profited by her prolonged absences to

harass and distress her subjects and to disorganise her government. But the great Countess was not disheartened by this temporary check to her schemes for the advancement of her people, whose welfare ever lay near her heart. "What is remarkable in the life of that heroine," remarks her biographer, "is that even in the midst of the incessant struggle with the Empire, in the most critical moments, she never lost sight of the works she intended to execute."

Immediately on her return to Tuscany she made an exhaustive survey of her marquisate, and while her eyes feasted upon its beauty of outline and colour, her busy brain projected ideas for the well-being of her subjects. The agricultural districts had recovered from their depression and were already on the high road to prosperity, but in the cities and towns she found many whom the war had reduced to the direst straits of poverty.

Matilda comprehended at a glance the need of giving employment to the able-bodied workmen and skilled artisans, and by this means relieving the wants of their families. The Germans had made sad havoc of the public and private edifices, and not a few of the towns were almost in ruins. The Countess wasted no time in vain lamentation, but engaged the services of the inhabitants in repairing the mischief. She gladdened the hearts of the people by herself superintending the rebuilding of their homes, and with liberal hand she defrayed all the cost of labour and material. "At her bidding castles and palaces, convents and cathedrals, statues and public monuments, arose throughout Tuscany."[1]

Matilda's tour was performed on horseback, and during her long and wearisome journeys she was made painfully aware of the hindrance to trade offered by the uneven surface of the unmade roads, With her customary promptness she caused gangs of men to be set to work to repair not only the principal routes but also to open out fresh communication with the more remote parts of the provinces. Such an

[1] *Essays on Ecclesiastical Biography.* Right Hon. Sir James Stephen.

extensive work gave occupation to a great many of her impoverished people, whose labours were quickened and lightened by her liberality and appreciation.

In addition to these restorations and improvements Matilda had in view yet more stupendous undertakings—undertakings of which a female mind could hardly have been deemed capable. Amongst these was the construction of solid bridges to span the Arno and other important rivers upon which her cities were built. She herself directed, with critical eye, the movements of the operatives engaged in this beneficial scheme for the extension of trade. Herculean, indeed, was the task in those days when mechanics and engineering were but little understood, and when there were no hydraulic appliances by which to lift into position the huge masses of masonry.

Freely the Great Countess devoted her wealth and energies to furthering these and similar projects for the establishment of local industries which the late wars had destroyed or interrupted. Nor did she, in her anxious solicitude for the financial progress of her subjects, neglect to provide for their spiritual and social welfare. By the aid of her riches cathedrals and churches raised their stately heads towards the blue canopy of heaven as if to implore blessings on their generous benefactor. Monasteries were built and endowed within which were gathered not only monks and scholars but also those whose physical infirmities or age prevented them from gaining a livelihood, and whose friends could not maintain them. In those days of catholicity, though men were careless of life and limb, poverty was not regarded as criminal, and there yet dwelt within them the spirit of charity which led them to feed even the most undeserving poor. There were no degradations or labour tests imposed upon the applicants for relief, who regarded religious institutions as havens of rest where food and shelter were never withheld. Matilda recognised the value of these asylums, and her generous support and frequent visits caused to ascend on high that most

efficacious of all prayers — the thanks of the grateful poor.

The difficulties of equestrian travelling in Tuscany had been considerably lessened by the labour devoted to the reconstruction of the roads, and the Great Countess, in her journeys through her extensive territory, had reason to congratulate herself on the success of the work. She was now enabled, with less fatigue and expenditure of time, to come within easy reach of the most distant parts of her patrimony and to see for herself the condition of her people. With tender solicitude she allowed herself, during these tours, to be accessible to all, both high and low, and none were excluded from speech with her. Matilda's greatest desire was to be regarded as their protector, and her sympathetic mind enabled her to enter into the nature of the trials and misfortunes by which they were afflicted. This personal contact, of the immense value of which she was fully aware, brought her an intimate knowledge of their real and pressing needs, which her true and loving heart pitied and relieved.

The civil authority of the Great Countess was unlimited and gave her the right of judging and condemning her subjects without reserve or appeal. In the hands of an unscrupulous ruler this power might, and often did, in that rude age degenerate into tyranny. It was therefore fortunate for the Tuscans that Heaven had blessed them with a princess remarkable alike for the fidelity and talent with which she fulfilled her trust. Her intimacy with their affairs and her knowledge of jurisprudence enabled her to perform her office with singular discrimination and thoroughness. When she made a stay at one or other of her palaces it became for the time being a veritable court of appeal for those, and they were many, who considered themselves unjustly treated. But woe to those who had ground down the poor or defrauded the helpless; for these Matilda had no mercy. The spirit of her sires awoke within her at the least sign of injustice, and her sentences, delivered with withering glances of contempt, were

severe, and also deterrent in their effect upon undetected offenders.

The devotion of the Great Countess to her people's interests was fully responded to by their enthusiastic attachment to her person. Her appearance was invariably the signal for demonstrations of joy, mingled with the fervent prayers of those whom her bounty had relieved or her justice delivered from oppression.

In course of years the marquisate, under her enlightened government, rose to an eminence of riches and prosperity which pervaded all classes of society, and which made it the cynosure of all the neighbouring princes. Nor did they dare attempt to wrest from her by force the possessions which were within reach of their covetous grasp. Her long and strategic struggles with Germany, and her brilliant victory over the imperial army, had made her a power to be respected in the land. Her heroic and successful defence of her territory in those days, when it was difficult even for a mailed hand to guard its own, and "her firm grasp of the reins of government, won from the other monarchs of the West the outward homage and the real deference reserved for sovereign potentates."

Matilda's principal claims to admiration rested not altogether on her patriotism and valour, brilliant traits though they were. It was her stainless purity and her largeness of soul which were the magnets by which she attracted all that was noble and worthy. Nor was her fame confined to Italy. Glowing accounts of her beauty, her munificence, the depth and variety of her learning and her blameless life, had been sung by the minstrels in every Court of Europe.

Whether the death of Gregory awoke within the breast of the King some latent feelings of remorse, or whether the intermittent insurrections of his subjects engrossed his attention to the exclusion of other matters, is not known. Whatever the reason may have been, it is certain that, to the relief of the Italians, he ceased to interfere with their

affairs, and gave no indications of again entering upon the war-path.

Donizo, the faithful chronicler of each phase of Matilda's history, comments with joyful pen upon the welcome fact that during the four years which had elapsed since her midnight repulse of the Germans she had enjoyed a respite from Henry's hostility. The storms which had clouded her horizon dispersed and were succeeded by a period of comparative tranquillity. The deaths of Gregory and of Bishop Anselm, the friends of her childhood, struck a deep blow at Matilda's affections. Her sorrow made her even more tender of others than she had hitherto been, and she found comfort in seeking out the widows and orphans who had given their bread-winners to the cause of the Church. Like certain plants which, when crushed, yield a sweet perfume, so misfortune brought into stronger relief the unselfishness which was one of her chief characteristics. Her grief became tempered by time, and in promoting the spiritual and material prosperity of her people she realised the secret of true and lasting happiness, that "no man liveth unto himself."

Although she did not leave her palaces in Lucca, Florence and other cities entirely deserted, but resided in them at various intervals, it was on the Castle of Canossa that her affections were centred. It was the birthplace of her father and grandsires, and there she herself first opened her eyes to the beautiful world around her. With many a tender recollection of friends now passed from earth she made the castle her home.

Never, even in the days of Boniface the Magnificent, had the citadel contained so much of courtly refinement, of art and culture, as was now assembled within its walls. With serene and serious air, tempered by a gracious sweetness, the Great Countess welcomed to her Court all who were distinguished for learning and virtue. Here met the fastidious and elegantly-dressed Roman nobles, brave knights and

squires, painters, poets and musicians, and with them mingled the black-robed Benedictines and secular clergy on their way to or from the Eternal City. No matter how obscure the birth or how slender the purse of her guests, all were sure of a kindly reception and a helping hand "if they had any pretensions to literature or art."

Matilda's scientific pursuits, which had been interrupted by the wars and the unsettled period of Victor's pontificate, were now resumed, and the collection of rare MSS. which she had amassed during her mother's lifetime received many valuable additions. Under her directions copies were made in writing not only of the classical authors of Greece and Rome, but also of the Holy Scriptures, whose inspired words were exquisitely illuminated and embellished by the most skilful artists of the day.

Nor were her studies mere ornamental or superficial acquirements. Their variety and depth would, even in this age, have rendered her name illustrious, and their profoundness would have given her a high place in the world of literature. Contemporaries tell us that her acquaintance with foreign languages enabled her to converse with equal ease in German, French or the poetic Provençal with the knights who frequented her Court. "To priests and scholars she spoke in the language of ancient Rome," proudly remarks the faithful recording pen of Donizo.[1]

"The Italians," we are told, "were early in the field of modern inquiry" into the principles of Political Economy, and Matilda's knowledge of this science, which she derived from a study of Plato and his pupil, Aristotle, was of remark-

[1] "Responsum cunctis hœc dat sine murmure turbis
Hœc hilaris semper facie placida quoque mente.
Hœc apices dictat, scit Theutonicam bene linguam ;
Hœc Longobardos mitrit regit et facit altos.

. . . . . . . . .

Nullus ea præsul studiosior invenietur
Copia liborum non deficit huicve bonorum
Libros ex cunctis habet artibus atque figuris."

*Literary History of the Middle Ages*, by J. Berrington, 1846.

able extent. Its practice not only materially assisted her in the government of her marquisate, but "also enabled her to provide an answer to the most astute questions propounded by the most serious portion of her guests."

Ere death had deprived her of the counsel of Anselm, the Countess had, under his direction, entered upon the study of jurisprudence, and with his assistance she prepared a code of laws "for the revision of which she enlisted the service of a jurist." At her desire the Bishop himself compiled for her use "a collection of the canon law," and after his death she continued her researches into this comparatively unknown branch of learning. "She realised fully the importance of having good laws as the basis of sound government, and sought in their firm administration a remedy for the distraction of her country. Under the guidance of able tutors she threw herself with such zest into her work that she became no mean authority in the interpretation and application of Roman or civil law."

In addition to her ordinary correspondence she herself, without the assistance of her chaplain, the poet Donizo wrote letters to the various Pontiffs during whose reign she lived. Unlike the short, concise epistles of modern days, these were lengthy and laborious compositions, written in a somewhat verbose and ponderous style, involving a thorough knowledge of Latin, in which tongue they were invariably written. Only a few of her letters have been preserved, and so woven is the life of "The Great Countess" with tradition that the authenticity even of these has sometimes been doubted. The commencement of some of these epistles, however, scarcely varies, and is too consistent with her general expression of independence not to be of her own composition:—"Matilda, such as she is by the grace of God, if she is anything, to all the faithful, greeting."

"La grande Comtessa" carried the weight of her forty-four years with a dignity and grace which many a younger woman might well have envied. Time and trouble, which

would have aged most of her sex, had but added a softness of expression which charmed and fascinated all who approached her.

With all the advantages we have enumerated, accompanied by an engaging manner and remarkable beauty of feature and person, it is hardly to be wondered at that she had many suitors. Her hand was regarded in the European courts as a desirable prize, for which there were many eager competitors. Matilda was, however, too much engaged in governing her restless subjects and in guarding her northern boundary against intruders to give any consideration to such a purely personal matter.

Among the numerous aspirants for the honour of gaining her approbation was Robert, the son of William the Conqueror. On succeeding his father as Duke of Normandy he had travelled to Tuscany, and as a possible means of retrieving his fortunes offered to marry the Countess. Unfortunately for Robert the reports of his wild, undisciplined nature had preceded him and gained nothing to his advantage by the oft-repeated narrative of his exploits. Even if Matilda found leisure and inclination to indulge in matrimonial dreams, the very mention of his name would quickly have dissipated them.

But "La grande Comtessa" was about to enter into a marriage sooner than she intended or even contemplated.

Urban, aware of the sacrifice she had made for the Church in her youth, believed the time was come when she should be called upon to renounce her personal feelings to further the interests of the Holy See. He concluded that it was desirable, even for her own safety, that she should form an alliance with a prince who, in the unsettled condition of Italy, should be sufficiently powerful to defend the property of his wife and that of the Church also. At this period of history Europe was agitated by the spirit of unrest, and the clash of arms deadened the ear alike to charity and the pleas of the impoverished peasantry. In Germany, the Saxons, reduced

almost to slavery by their crowned despot, made a steady and continuous resistance to Henry's tyranny, and the empire was the theatre of a cruel and exhaustive war. Nor were affairs much better in England. William II. had succeeded to the throne by the will of his father, and was engaged in unnatural contest with his brothers for its possession. Lanfranc, the learned Archbishop of Canterbury, who survived the Conqueror two years, had passed to his rest, and the revenues of his See were appropriated by the King to his own use. Everywhere personal prowess and brutal force prevailed and engaged the attention of society to the utter exclusion of aught that would enlighten its mind or reform its morals. Far from these scenes of strife, of which the rumours reached her as the sullen roar of distant seas, Matilda "pursued the even tenor of her way," and in her palaces nurtured into maturity the fine arts which have rendered her country famous. While other rulers were struggling to secure the permanency of their authority and were crushing their subjects into servile submission, in Tuscany there was one, and that one a woman, who, in the rare intervals of peace which her persistent enemy allowed her to enjoy, devoted herself to the pursuit of learning.

Matilda, whilst duly admitting the wisdom of the plan projected by the Pontiff, was so entirely heart-free, that it was impossible for her to make a choice. Her position among the other rulers of Italy was peculiar. Her sex, her riches and her learning served to isolate her from their companionship, while her acknowledged supremacy raised her pre-eminently above their influence.

At her request Urban himself came to the rescue and suggested as a husband an obedient son of the Church who was fully competent to fulfil the conditions which his marriage with Matilda required.

This was Welf, son of the reigning Duke of Bavaria, who was considered to be one of the handsomest and most chivalrous princes of the age. The young knight had

already won his spurs and gained martial fame in the field as the leader of the Saxon revolt against the tyranny of the German King. "Thus," calculated the Pontiff, in his wisdom, "to the indomitable courage of the noble Countess and to all the resources of her rich country would be united the troops under the young Duke of Bavaria. The union would result in a combination too formidable for either Emperor or anti-pope to withstand or overthrow."

It may be interesting to note that the name of this family, afterwards so well known to history in its Italianised form of Guelph, is said to owe its origin to the following legend.

An ancestor of Welf Isenbart was renowned for having saved Charlemagne from being gored by a bull and for his fierce and imperious nature. One day, when he was returning from a hunt, he was met by a peasant, to whom, in answer to a request for an alms, he used insolent and insulting language. The woman, stung almost to madness by his taunts, foretold to him that his wife should have as many children at a birth as there were months in the year. The prophecy, so the story runs, was realised, and one night, while Isenbart was away from home, to the alarm of the whole household the wail of twelve infants simultaneously filled the castle. The mother, fearful of her husband's anger at so rapid an addition to his family, gave orders that eleven of the children should be drowned ere his return. On her way to execute the cruel order the maid was confronted by the Duke, who, struck by the suspicious manner in which she attempted to evade him, asked what she had in her basket. "Welfen" (puppies) replied the frightened servant. Isenbart's curiosity was now thoroughly aroused, and raising the cover, in spite of the tearful protestations of the maid, discovered, to his intense astonishment, eleven healthy-looking boys fast asleep. The words of the peasant flashed across his mind, and he intuitively guessed that the infants were his own. Having sworn the girl to silence, he gave the children into

the charge of his steward to rear them in strict secrecy, under the name of "Welf." When they were fully grown into fine stalwart lads he brought them one day to his castle, and to the amazement of the Court introduced them to their mother and to their more delicately nurtured brother."[1]

The Saxon word Welf, better known in Italy as Guelph, became later, in the reign of Barbarossa, the title of a faction of the Church, or Ghibellines, who favoured the Emperor. "Our sympathies," remarks the historian, "must go with the Guelphic cities, in whose victory we recognise the triumph of freedom and civil liberty."[2]

About a quarter of a century before Matilda's marriage with a Guelph, a member of that family had espoused Judith, widow of the English King, Harold. At a later date another branch of the family married Maud, daughter of Henry II. of England," at whose persuasion the Emperor conferred on the Guelphs the Duchy of Brunswick." From this line sprang the House of Hanover, "which, since the beginning of the eighteenth century, has given kings to Great Britain."

Matilda herself claimed descent from the Guelphs, her great grandfather Azzo having married the heiress of that illustrious family "whose princes and princesses were remarkable for their devotion, their piety towards God and their most religious attachment to the Apostolic See."

In 1090 all Tuscany was electrified at the news of the coming marriage of "La grande Comtessa." The probable effect this change of affairs would have upon the future of the marquisate was discussed in castle and cottage with that freedom and animation which is typical of the Italians.

Once again the princess entered into the bonds of matrimony, and once again for the welfare of the Church she entered upon an alliance in which existed no affection and no groundwork of agreement save that of upholding the

[1] *History of Germany.* Translated by Mrs G. Horrocks. London: G. Bell & Son, 1876.
[2] Bryce.

Papal Throne. Nearly thirty years had now passed away since when, on the verge of womanhood, she had stood before the altar as a bride, whose hand was to be the price of clearing the path of Alexander II. to the throne. This time the discrepancy of age was on Matilda's side. Welf was very young and the twenty-five years of difference between them rose up as a barrier and prevented that unity of ideas and tastes which might have drawn them together had their ages been more equal. Their union never became a close one, and in its utter absence of mutual sympathy resembled those compacts which are entered into by members of royal houses for mere political reasons. This divergence of opinion was apparent from the very outset, when the princess and her husband were determining their future residence. Matilda, on this as on every other point which touched her patriotism, remained firm as granite. No arguments that the youthful bridegroom brought forward could move her; she steadily adhered to the stipulation she had made with her first consort that she should not be required to leave "her dear country." Welf, who entertained feelings of warm regard and admiration for his wife, unwillingly yielded, and when affairs demanded his presence in Bavaria he made the journey alone.

It was as well that the Countess had made the resolution of remaining within her own borders, since the restless King of Germany, after nearly six years' interval, was again preparing for a descent upon Italy. Of late he had been too much occupied in quarrels with his nobles and with dissensions in his own family to give much thought to Tuscany. The news of his cousin's marriage with an enemy of his house filled him with rage, and his imprecations upon the head of Welf were so fierce that the friends of the Bavarian prince sent to warn him of Henry's project.

The monarch's anger was more especially directed against Urban, whose influence he rightly conjectured had brought about the union. His intention was to drive the Pope, as he

had already driven Gregory, not merely from the Papal Chair, but from Rome itself, and to control the tiara through Guibert. Sanguine of success, he presented himself at the head of his army before the gates of the Capitol. Nor was his anticipation of victory doomed to disappointment; his path was clear and his admittance unopposed. The citizens, taken by surprise and awed by the strength and numbers of the imperial troops, made no show of resistance, but with feelings of impotent wrath witnessed the triumphant entry of the conqueror. In all the pride of insolence he marched direct to the palace of the Popes, within which Guibert, tired of his equivocal position and not daring to venture forth, awaited the prince whom he had created Emperor, and whose presence would invest him with the semblance of authority. The German soldiers, who had been left in Rome as his body-guard, hailed the appearance of their King and countrymen with rapture, as a relief from the uncongenial task of serving the anti-pope.

The streets were filled by the agitated Romans, whose violence of tone and angry gestures failed to draw any retort from the stolid veterans who regarded them with supreme indifference. Crowds of clergy and of the pious laity, with distress and anxiety depicted upon their faces, hurried towards the Castle of St Angelo, which was for the time the centre of authority for the Christian world. All were bound upon the same errand—to consult with the Sovereign Pontiff as to the steps to be taken in this dilemma, and to be guided by his counsel.

Urban, uncertain how to act in this perplexity, and not wishing to quit Rome until reduced to the last extremity, bethought him of the "Daughter of St Peter." "He wrote," says Donizo, "letters upon letters to the Countess, he sent legates upon legates, he recalled to her mind the oaths she had made to Gregory swearing to save the Holy See."

Although the Romans had allowed the German King undisputed possession of their city, Matilda, in her devotion

to the Church, had ever a watchful eye to the safety of its Vicar, and it was fortunate for Urban that she had been forewarned of Henry's approach. So great, according to report, was the numerical strength of the German army that to resist its progress was impossible. To attempt a battle would be but to court defeat, a calamity which would deprive the Papal Throne of the only means by which its defence could be accomplished. Robert Guiscard was dead, and only from Matilda and her husband could Urban hope for support in this crisis of his reign.

Again the indomitable Countess proved herself a tower of strength to the failing hopes of the Pontiff, and for his succour she brought with her to Rome a body of her most trusty men-at-arms.

She was not any too soon, since Henry had lost no time in his preparations for laying a strict siege to St Angelo, and in a short time an escape for Urban would be rendered impossible. The attention of the King was so concentrated upon the investment of the castle, that the watch over the city gates was somewhat relaxed, and this departure from the rules of military discipline facilitated the entrance of the princess.

By a series of manœuvres and a dexterity of movement of which only Matilda was capable, she succeeded in forcing her way into the Capitol. The rest was easy, for by friendly connivance she was able to obtain means of communication with the Pontiff by which to arrange plans for his release.

Although Urban might have commanded the sentinels, under pain of excommunication, to open to him the doors of freedom, he restrained himself. He knew that their lives would be forfeited for their fidelity to the Holy See, and he preferred to take the responsibilities of his flight upon his own shoulders.

At length, one day, though with great difficulty, he eluded their vigilance, and taking advantage of the opportunity which might never occur again, he passed quickly and

unperceived through the gates. Once without the walls of the castle he was safe. Ere he could be challenged by the guard he was surrounded and closed in by Matilda's knights, who had long been awaiting this hour, and accompanied by the faithful Matilda he placed himself *en route* for Norman territory. The citizens, who recognised the Pontiff and knelt for his blessing, could ill conceal their delight at the defeat of Henry's designs. Reports of the flight of Urban created widespread excitement, and at length reached the ears of Henry. Great was the chagrin of that monarch when he found that his victim was on his way to Benevento and far beyond the reach of pursuit. He consoled himself with the thought that he had fulfilled his intention of driving the Pontiff from Rome, and the next step he proposed was to proceed to Tuscany and reduce Matilda to submission.

Everything was in readiness for his expedition when his plans were suddenly disorganised and he was compelled to forego his campaign. Urgent messages reached him requiring his immediate presence in Germany, where he was called upon to combat with an enemy who threatened him in his own household. This was his eldest son, who, as a babe, had taken part in the fearful journey to Canossa, "the memory of which still haunted Bertha's dreams." Poor Queen! She, who through all the miseries of her married life had kept sacred the love she felt when she first called the boy-king husband, what must have been her sorrow to see the hand of her first-born raised against his father? "Far better," thought the unhappy wife and mother, "had he died an infant on my breast than have lived to bring his father into deadly conflict with those of his own kindred." Her pious soul had long been troubled by the remembrance of the sacrilegious act which she had shared with her lord. In allowing herself to be crowned in Rome by the anti-pope she had tacitly acknowledged his right to perform the ceremony. Had Gregory, however, lived to see her misfortunes, he would have been the first to assure her that her motives were so pure and

unselfish that she must not regard her trials as a punishment for ignoring his authority as head of the Church.

Henry's persistent cruelty to the patient Queen, his open immorality and his impiety, had turned the hearts of his children from him. Conrad, who had just (1092) entered upon his seventeenth year, had, from childhood, shrunk from his father's overtures of affection with such evident repugnance that Henry upbraided his wife with alienating his son's love. "It is alone to the crimes of a father," remarks the historian, "that are attributed the defection of a son." The same authority describes the prince as "a veritable Christian, who abhorred the schism of his father and possessing a spirit firm and right which detested shameful weakness and ruses."

Henry's frequent and lengthy absences from his kingdom, the disaffection of the nobles and his excommunication from the Church, made insurrection both possible and easy. His deposition was regarded by Conrad, not as a means of advancing his own interests, but as the only way by which his country could be saved from the internal wars which appeared imminent. The prince had, on the death of his maternal grandmother, Adelaide, succeeded to her rich estates in Italy. With money and men at his command, and promises of help from his new subjects, he believed the hour was come to wrest the sceptre from his father's unworthy hand. Conrad, however, was not popular with the Saxon chiefs, to whom he applied for aid. Doubtless they would have preferred to see one of their own race upon the throne, and they would give no encouragement to the proposed rising. The Germans are a faithful people, and the return of their King revived within them the dying flame of loyalty. With one accord they flocked to his standard and the cause of Conrad was doomed. The unhappy youth, whom his father had always viewed with suspicion and dislike, paid a severe penalty for his unfilial conduct. He was brought as a prisoner into the presence of his justly-incensed parent,

deprived of all rights of succession, dismissed with contumely from Court, and condemned to perpetual exile.

The sight of his father's stern and implacable countenance roused the sleeping remorse of the conscience-stricken prince, and he listened in silence to the judgment pronounced upon him, and from which he made no appeal. It was the latter part of the sentence that weighed most heavily upon the culprit, for it deprived him of the companionship of his mother, and he gazed through a mist of tears at the sad face he now saw for the last time on earth. In vain the bereaved Bertha cast herself at the feet of her lord and besought him to be merciful and remit the sentence of banishment. The King's only reply was to order Conrad's instant expulsion. The words fell like a knell upon the ears of the Queen. Her son's humiliation bowed her to the earth and rendered her an easy prey to a slow fever, from the effects of which she never rallied. Within twelve months of her decease Henry married Praxedis, the daughter of a Russian Count, who, says the historian, "trembled before her husband as a lamb before the teeth of a wolf." She became so terrified at Henry's harsh treatment that she contrived to escape from the prison in which he had confined her, and fled for sympathy and assistance to Matilda. The Countess, in whose heart "the voice of blood and of pity spoke loudly," had already granted an asylum to Conrad for his mother's sake, and the two victims of Henry's oppression met together under the same hospitable roof. From this circumstance it has been asserted that Conrad's revolt had been countenanced by the princess. It is impossible to believe that the high-minded Matilda, with her exalted ideas of filial duty, would have encouraged a son to rebel against his own father, even though that father was her enemy. Her stainless reputation, her piety and her moral training shames such a suspicion of her integrity.

Conrad's bitter repentance of his fault was much aggravated by the knowledge of all the additional trouble it

had brought upon his mother. He upbraided himself with having caused her death, and endeavoured henceforth to live in a manner befitting her memory. After a few years of expiation he died, "full of faith and good works," and was sincerely mourned by the warm-hearted Italians, whose esteem he had won by his piety and by the fortitude with which he bore his sufferings.

Matilda kept tender watch at the bedside at the motherless exile, and the gentle murmur of her fervent prayers fell like dew upon the contrite soul of the dying prince. Nor did her kindness stop here. She gave her unfortunate young relative a burial befitting his rank, and erected to his memory in her own city of Florence, "a magnificent tomb worthy of a king and a Christian."

While Matilda was occupied with soothing Conrad's path to the grave, a change was taking place in Rome which appeared to give satisfaction to all parties.

On his return to Germany, Henry had taken with him all the forces he could muster, and the anti-pope, being thus deprived of the protection of the troops, began to feel his position to be one of extreme danger to his liberty, and even his life. He does not appear to have made any use of his arrogated power, and after usurping the throne for nine years he suddenly quitted Rome and ceased to trouble the Church. He died in 1100.

The path thus cleared, Urban returned (1093) to take possession of the Chair of St Peter, and, in the language of the historian, "recovered the independence of the tiara."

Two years later he convened a Council, which he held at Placentia, "in the very midst of the schismatical Lombards." It was numerously attended by all ranks of clergy and nobles anxious to testify their devotion to the Holy See. "Besides two hundred prelates and four thousand clerics who responded to the call, there were thirty thousand of the laity who signified their intention of being present. An imposing protest," remarks the same authority "on behalf of the peace

of the Church to which the presence of delegates from Germany, from the Kings of France and England, and from the East, added additional significance." So enormous was the gathering, that there was no building large enough to contain so many persons, and tents were hurriedly erected in the open field for their reception.

The same year (1095) Urban paid a visit to his native country, where he held, at Clermont, a Council which was prolonged for ten days. It was at this meeting that Peter the Hermit, a native of Amiens, requested an audience of the Pontiff. By his description of the sad condition of the holy places, and the barbarous treatment to which pilgrims to them were subjected, by his emotion, and by his entreaties, he moved many of those present to tears. Urban was so touched by his zeal and simple eloquence that he gave his assent to the first Crusade to win the Holy City from the infidels, "an idea which Gregory had transmitted as a legacy to his successors."

It would have been Henry's privilege, had he been crowned Emperor, to have, as the name implied, commanded this war of the Cross. His present anomalous position, however, precluded the possibility of his heading the expedition. No European ruler took his place in the first Crusade, although the Sovereigns lent their countenance to the mighty army composed of and organised by nobles and knights of every land. Philip I. of France was, as we are reminded, "a prince too much addicted to pleasure, and too infamous by his irregularities to be capable of any great undertaking." Nor was the English King, the dissolute William Rufus, better qualified to command an army of "Soldiers of the Cross." "This monarch was," remarks Hume, "destitute alike of religious feeling and religious principle." He had at this time recovered from a dangerous illness, and "returned to his former violence and rapine. He still preyed upon the ecclesiastical benefices. The sale of spiritual dignities continued as open as ever, and he kept possession of a

considerable part of the revenues belonging to the See of Canterbury." In vain the gentle and pious Archbishop Anselm attempted to restrain the monarch from the repeated acts of simony and robbery which daily threatened to draw upon him the excommunication which his conduct deserved.

"In order to animate the faithful to assist in this undertaking, Urban granted a plenary indulgence," and the apostolic blessing to all who should take part in it.[1] "God wills it," was the cry, and the enthusiasm thus created by the Crusaders spread like wildfire throughout every Court in Europe.

In a short time the volunteers numbered three hundred thousand, or, according to a modern historian,[2] six hundred thousand men, the first division of which was drawn from the provinces of the Rhine. "The crusaders, under the military conduct of Godfrey of Bouillon, consisted of the very choicest troops, and were led by the most distinguished champions of Christendom." It was at the Pope's personal request that the knight had been chosen to lead this religious expedition. He was at this time in his thirty-fifth year, and his portrait is thus described: "He himself was a tall, strong man, arrived at that period of life when men are supposed to have lost none of their resolution while they have acquired a wisdom and circumspection unknown in their earlier years. The countenance of Godfrey bespoke both prudence and boldness, and resembled his hair, where a few threads of silver were already mingled with his raven locks."[3] "Godfrey, the model of Christian heroes," says his biographer, "united to a penetrating and solid judgment the most intrepid courage and extraordinary strength of mind and body." He had, on Henry's

[1] "Here is," continues the Chevalier D'Artaud, "a new proof of Luther's error," which denied the existence of indulgences in the earlier ages of the Church's history.

[2] Sir Walter Scott.

[3] Sir Walter Scott.

investment of Rome during the Pontificate of Gregory, been one of the first to enter the Capitol. The idea that he had thereby "violated the City of Saint Peter sat heavily on his soul." Being shortly afterwards stricken by a fever, he vowed that in the event of his recovery he would go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The Crusade, therefore, presented to him an opportunity not only of fulfilling his promise but also of devoting his life to the service of the Lord, against whose Vicar on earth he had formerly taken arms.

# Matilda, Countess of Tuscany

## CHAPTER XIII

"Dost thou not see upon my breast
The cross of the Crusaders shine?
My pathway leads to Palestine."

*The Golden Legend.*

BEFORE returning to Rome, Urban made an exhaustive tour throughout France. "This French Pope," quaintly remarks the historian, "felt great joy in thus travelling in his native country." Everywhere he held Councils in which questions relative to Church organisation were discussed, and received his final judgment. Discipline was enforced in the case of King Philip, who had divorced his wife and taken in her place Bertrade, the beautiful Countess of Anjou. It was only after Philip "had sworn upon the Gospels never to repeat the offence," that the excommunication was removed, after it had been twice inflicted upon the amorous monarch. Bitterly did Bertrade repent of her fault, and "renouncing the world of which she had been so long the idol she took the religious veil at Fontevraud," in one of the strictest orders of the time.

At Tours the Pontiff was received by the afflicted husband, and rewarded him for his exemplary life and his services to the Church by the presentation of the Golden Rose. This is probably the first instance on record of a custom which has since prevailed, in which the devotion of Rulers to the Holy See and their example of a moral life were publicly recognised by a gift from the Church. The title of "Rose Sunday" was afterwards given to the fourth Sunday in Lent. On that day it was usual for the reigning Pontiff "to ride in state on horseback, wearing his mitre and

bearing the flower in his hand, to assist at the mass in Santa Croce" the church endowed by the Empress Helena. In later times the gift took the form of an ornament, consisting of a single red flower of wrought gold, the petals of which were adorned with rubies, and which, after lying on the altar during mass, was sent to the person for whom it was intended.

His tour of inspection completed, Urban took leave of his countrymen and reached Rome in time for the Christmas festivities. His "home-coming was celebrated by the citizens as a day of joy." "He himself was happy in the thought that he had realised the wishes of Gregory, who had especially encouraged the idea of that Holy War." The Eternal City, under Urban's enlightened rule and undisturbed by Henry's emissaries, soon resumed its former customs, and the Pontiff, having arranged his affairs, repaired to Lucca to pay his long-promised visit to Matilda.

The Countess was at that time alone, her husband having permanently returned to his Duchy of Bavaria. During the first years of his married life, Welf, who had not yet attained his twenty-sixth year, spent a good deal of time in his wife's society. He took no part in the government of her estates, nor did he make any protest against her well-known intention of bequeathing them to the Church at her death. But although the prince was a kind and considerate husband, he was far from happy in the refinement and tranquillity in which his days were passed. To one of his active temperament the tedium was almost repulsive. He had but little sympathy with Matilda's studies, and the strict ceremonial observed at her Court chafed him beyond endurance. From childhood he had been accustomed to the variety and excitement of the camp, and had been early trained to arms. Young as he was when he quitted Germany, he had already acquired no mean reputation for his skill in the military exercises in which the nobles of the time were wont to compete. Withdrawn from the favourite pursuits into which he was

accustomed to throw his whole heart and soul, and pining for some outlet for his pent-up energies, no wonder Welf was unhappy. Matilda's patriotism made allowances for the prince's evident yearning for home, and when, after little more than five years of matrimonial life, he proposed returning to his native land she raised no obstacle to his plans. There were several reasons which urged him to bring matters to this crisis. His affairs were sadly in need of his superintendence, and though probably he would have deferred his final separation from his wife to a more remote period, events had happened which demanded his immediate presence in Bavaria. Henry, the reigning Duke, weary of the world into which his son was so eager to enter, "longed to exchange his robes for the cowl and serge, and the tapestried chamber and bed of down for the pallet, and the dark and lonely cell for the sounds of joy and laughter." He thereupon resigned his duchy in favour of his son Welf, who naturally became anxious to secure his patrimony.

The Duke, after vainly imploring his wife to accompany him to share his life and his home, reluctantly bade her an affectionate farewell. He assembled his followers, and to their ill-concealed delight quitted the Italian shores for scenes of greater enterprise and change.

A few months after he had parted from Matilda, Urban arrived to pay his long-deferred visit. Had the impatient Welf tarried a while longer he would have formed part of that renowned band of heroes whose exploits have made their names famous throughout the civilised world.

The Pontiff was met at Lucca by a body of Crusaders, whose love of adventure made them impatient to start on the perilous enterprise which had received the special sanction of the Church.

Matilda and her maidens had embroidered a number of red badges to be worn on the arms of the fiery young warriors. Many a prayer for their safe home-coming was woven with the insignia of their faith by those whose

thoughts and love would follow them beyond seas. In those early days, before Florence Nightingale had led the way for ambulance work, there was no organised system of nursing. Since in that age their friends were engaged in constant feuds it behoved every woman to have a knowledge of surgery, however primitive it may have been in its application. The ladies, early accustomed to the sight of blood, did not shrink from the task of washing and binding up wounds. They were adepts in the art of making salves and restoratives and in preparing lint for their disabled invalids. Matilda made it a special point that each knight was supplied with these necessary equipments, and the bright eyes of many a damsel grew dim with tears as she pictured her gay young warrior in need of these ghastly appendages of war.

For several months before the arrival of Urban the princess and her attendants had worked at a splendid banner which was to accompany the Crusaders, and which the Pontiff had promised to especially consecrate. Matilda's Court presented at this time a sight of unusual animation; a bustle quite foreign to the usual stillness prevailed everywhere, and even the princess caught the contagion of the general excitement. Mountaineers and lowland peasants came from all parts to satisfy their curiosity, and gazed in astonishment at the nodding plumes which surmounted the casques of the steel-clad cavaliers who passed through the villages of Matilda ere setting out for the East. The advent of Urban was the signal for universal outbursts of enthusiasm, and as the Pontiff gazed upon the haughty heads so reverently bowed before him, he sighed at the thought of how low some of them would soon be lying. Perhaps he foresaw that he would be numbered with the dead ere the return of the victors. With solemn words of encouragement and warning he consecrated and delivered to them the emblazoned banner, which was eagerly seized by their outstretched hands. Earnestly he implored the blessing of Heaven upon the kneeling army, and then turned to watch with keen interest

their preparations for departure. These were expeditiously carried out, for the Crusaders were in hot haste to be gone, and only tarried to take leave of Urban and of the hospitable Countess. Flinging themselves across their restive steeds, they were soon lost to sight in the clouds of dust raised by the rapidity of their movements.

The Pontiff enjoyed but a short interval of repose in Lucca, for he, too, was about to engage in a warfare no less fierce than that to which the Crusaders were hastening to test their strength. The contest, though not to be determined by force of arms, involved even more serious issues than that in which the doughty warriors had pledged themselves to be victorious. The renewal of the opposition of the Holy See to the imperial claim to investiture, demanded from its vicar a courage more than equal to that displayed by the "army of the Cross," and a patient endurance far surperior to the triumph of material force.

Before quitting Tuscany, Urban obtained from Matilda a new deed, which contained a ratification of her former gift of territory to the Church. "It set forth in the following terms all that passed between Gregory and the princess:—'I, Matilda, by the grace of God Countess, for the salvation of my soul and those of my ancestors, have given and offered to the Church of St Peter the whole of my goods that I possess, and those which I may acquire by right of succession, or any other title, according to the universal donation made and delivered to the hands of the Lord Gregory and Pope of the Roman Church.' 'The Holy Church,' continues the parchment, 'is free to dispose of them.'"[1]

Immediately on his return to Rome, Urban held a Council, and after a lengthy conference the exclusive right of the Church to confer investitures was clearly defined and unanimously adopted.

From Rome he proceeded to Bari, and there convened a Council, at which a hundred and ninety-five Bishops were

[1] Renée Amédée.

present. During the course of the debate Urban "called aloud to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had taken a seat at the end of the hall, saying, 'Anselm, our Father, and our own Master, where are you?' and caused him to sit next to him on the throne of honour." During the meeting the conduct of William II. of England came up for discussion, and, at the instance of the Council, it was desired that his simony and his oppression of the clergy should be punished by excommunication. Anselm, who had hitherto remained a silent but attentive listener to the debate, rose up and, casting himself at the feet of the Pontiff, entreated him not to pronounce the anathema upon his Sovereign.

The members of the Council were struck with astonishment that a man as ill-treated as Anselm had been by the King should thus generously take his part. His spontaneous and unexpected appeal for the absent monarch touched all hearts, and Urban, with a loving glance of admiration at the Archbishop, granted his request by the unanimous vote of the vast assemblage.

One other Council held at Rome was the last, by which the Pope "terminated his glorious career." His government was one of continual activity, and included his presence at no less than twelve Councils held in Italy and France.

Nor did his manifold duties prevent him from carrying out the rule of St Benedict with regard to literary work. In addition to his more lengthy compositions "fifty-nine of his letters are still preserved in the Concilia of Père Labbé" as witnesses of the extraordinary industry of this indefatigable Pontiff.

Urban, whose name has been honoured by the Church with the prefix of "Blessed," passed quietly away on 29th July 1099, after a busy pontificate of little more than eleven years' duration. "He died," remarks ths historian, "on the eve of that century of strife and confusion over which his spirit and that of Gregory hovered."

On his deathbed Urban's ears, so soon to close to earthly

sounds, were cheered by the glorious news of the recovery of Jerusalem from the infidels.

After the taking of Antioch, in which "the Crusaders became in turn besieged, and from which they emerged reduced by famine and pestilence," they continued their journey southwards to the Holy City. In Antioch they had accidentally discovered the spear which had pierced the side of our Divine Lord. This sacred relic they carried aloft, and its contemplation gave them strength to support their long and painful march. During the weary time they were without the walls of Jerusalem this trophy animated them to every effort to gain an entrance. After a siege of five weeks they effected their purpose, and the banner which the Pope had blessed floated in the van of the conquering army. Proudly they planted upon the broken walls Godfrey's own flag, which had led the German knights to many an encounter. Upon its waving folds were emblazoned an arrow transfixing three spread eagles, the sign of victorious arms, peculiarly adapted to the success which invariably attended the valiant commander in the field.

It is horrible even to think of the fearful massacre of Jews and infidels in consequence of their obstinate resistance to those who went thither in the name of the Prince of Peace. "Everything," narrates an eye-witness, "was swimming in blood, so that the very conquerors, weary with carnage, stood aghast at the spectacle. Beneath the porch of the mosque of Omar the blood rose to the knees, and even to the bridles, of the horses." [1]

Godfrey alone seems to have remembered the motives which drew the Crusaders so far from home. Divesting himself of his blood-stained garments of war, he clothed himself in a penitential garb of woollen, and thus attired went barefooted and unaccompanied round the city, and prostrated himself before the Holy Sepulchre. As he gazed upon the tomb of his Lord, and thought of the many lives sacrificed to preserve

[1] *Lives of the Roman Pontiffs*

it from violation, a wave of remorse swept over his generous soul; tears which he could not restrain fell from his eyes, and his form shook with the sobs which vibrated his manly bosom.

The Germans, who were engaged, together with their fellow-Christians, in putting the inhabitants to death, suddenly missed their leader, and becoming alarmed at his prolonged absence instituted a hurried search for him. On arriving at the grave they learned the cause of his retirement, for there, kneeling before the resting-place of his Divine Lord, they found the worthy descendant of Charlemagne. The lesson went home to them; they were overcome with shame at being the witness of a devotion and grief they should have shared. The carnage suddenly ceased, the soldiers flung aside their blood-stained weapons, and all that, and the succeeding night, Godfrey's example was followed by the whole army, and "every soldier in turn knelt in the Holy Places." "Sublime recall," continues the historian, in an outburst of admiration, "more potent than clarion or trumpet in bringing a Christian army back to its duty." Godfrey was, as has been truly remarked, "the one man in whom were united the warm faith and heroic valour, the utter denial of self, and the purity of life which had greatly contributed to the success of the crusade and rendered him above all others worthy to rule the Holy City."

At a gathering of the Crusaders the nobles and knights unanimously elected Godfrey de Bouillon to the throne of Jerusalem, but he firmly declined the proffered honour. "In a city where our Lord was crowned with thorns," said he, "it is not fitting for anyone to be King." He absolutely refused to accept either the name or insignia of royalty, merely reserving for himself the title of "Defender of the Holy Tomb of Christ." He drew up a code of laws for the control of the city, which were, according to historians, considered "such models of jurisprudence, that for more than eighty years they formed the basis of government."

Godfrey himself, to the regret of all Christendom, did not

long survive his victories. He died on 15th July 1099, just a year after the taking of Jerusalem. When the triumphant Crusaders returned to their homes "they left the devout and simple soldier of the Cross in his lonely grave at the foot of Mount Calvary."

The tidings of the death of Urban fell with awful suddenness upon the ears of those whom reports of the taking of Jerusalem had filled with joy. "From mouth to mouth the news was spread throughout Rome, and was received with incredulity at every court in Europe." The name of the heir of the noble Crescentius, and a native of Tuscany, was immediately whispered in ecclesiastical circles as a probable successor to the late Pontiff. The expressed opinion of the Holy Father in Renier's favour had, doubtless, lingered in the memory of the Cardinals, and influenced them in their desire to elect him to the Chair of St Peter. He had been trained from boyhood in the monastery at Cluny under the charge of Abbot Hugo, and Gregory, who had known him there, created him Cardinal-priest, as an acknowledgment of his piety and learning. Towards the close of his pontificate Urban had made a prolonged stay at the monastery, and was much charmed by the courteous and retiring disposition of the Cardinal, who still lived the simple life of a recluse.

Renier was present at the elective assembly, and was taking a lively interest in the preliminary discussion, when, like a thunderbolt, there came upon him the conviction that he himself might be chosen. Almost beside himself with terror at the mere possibility of such a consequence, the timorous Cardinal resolved, by immediate flight, to avoid the danger he dreaded but could not avert. He did not wait a second to consider the futility of the step he was about to take. Rising from his seat he hurriedly quitted the Council, at that moment engaged in recording his vote, which was, as he surmised, the only one dissentient to his election. He passed into the streets unchallenged by the guards, who preserved the privacy of the electors from the curiosity of the

public, and soon found himself at liberty. Unfortunately for Renier, his Cardinal's robe was quickly recognised by the crowd, who were awaiting the decision of the conclave, "and his undignified haste betrayed the secret he would fain have preserved from their knowledge." Escape was now impossible, and amid the acclamations of the people the fugitive Cardinal was reconducted to the Council Chamber.

At his entrance his fellow-electors rose in a body, and greeting him with cries of "St Peter wishes you as his successor," informed the trembling prelate of his elevation to the throne he had taken such pains to avoid.

In August of that year (1099) he was publicly crowned, taking the title of Pascal II., from the first of that name, who had died early in the ninth century and who was enrolled by the Church in her list of saints.

The Pontiff's affability soon gained for him the affections of his countrymen; "his gracious demeanour and piety had conciliated all around him, and his unanimous election brought to Rome a peace it had not known for a long time." But alas! Pascal's reluctance to wear the tiara, and his self-acknowledged unfitness for the dignity, were not assumed to prove his humility; on the contrary, subsequent events proved his estimate to be a correct one. Like the late Pontiff Victor, his remarkable timidity rendered him physically unequal to govern at such a crisis of the Church's history. But Victor, when put to the test, rose superior to his natural weakness, whereas Pascal "showed himself," severely remarks the historian, "very unable to comprehend the great cause for which his predecessors had fought."

Soon after Pascal's accession news reached him that Guibert, who had vacated the Papal Chair nearly seven years, had passed away to render a strict account of his usurpation.

The King of Germany, who had somewhat succeeded in reducing his rebellious subjects to order, was unfortunately at leisure at the time to turn his attention to Italy. Quietly

ignoring the election of Pascal by the votes of the Cardinals he chose a successor to the deceased anti-pope, and appointed a Cardinal-deacon named Albert to the throne of St Peter. The new claimant was soon disposed of. On the very day of his elevation he was arrested in Rome by the friends of the Pontiff and sent as a prisoner to the monastery of Aversa. Theodoric, a second usurper of the Papal authority, shared the same fate after a reign of about three months. Maingualfe, Abbot of Farfa, was the next anti-pope sent by the King to be the successor of the Apostles. Escorted to the palace by the imperial troops it was not easy to eject the intruder without causing bloodshed, and Pascal preferred to reign at St Angelo rather than pass over the bodies of the slain to the Pontifical throne. Maingualfe took the title of Sylvester IV., and although eighty Pontiffs have succeeded to the throne it is remarkable that not one has taken the name of the Saint thus desecrated by the proud Abbot. Unacknowledged by any European Sovereign save the German King, he reigned in solitary state, and without a vestige of authority, until two years after the death of that monarch, whom he survived.

Soon after his accession Pascal lost, in Count Roger of Sicily, one of his stoutest champions, whose death occurred just at a period when the Pope was sorely in need of secular assistance. Indeed, the pontificate of Pascal was from the outset most unhappy and unsatisfactory both to himself and to the Church he represented. Misfortunes and difficulties accumulated until, as the historian relates, "he knew nothing but pains and torments, which rendered his life only one continual martyrdom."

To add to his troubles, the clouds of war, which had long appeared in the distance, now gathered, and like a nimbus obscured the horizon. Rumours of the vast preparations which were being made in Germany for a prolonged campaign were daily carried to the Pontiff and filled his heart and those of his faithful flock with unrest and alarm.

Indeed, there was great cause for anxiety, for a crisis was approaching which was to determine the liberty of the Church and of Italy.

The spirit of cruelty had, since Conrad's rebellion, taken up its abode within the breast of the King. Not satisfied with wreaking his anger upon his own subjects, he began to mature his design of subduing Tuscany, a scheme which the revolt of his son had interrupted. Conrad, the proscribed heir of the German throne, had died repentant but unforgiven by his father in the shelter afforded him by the woman whose overthrow Henry was now contemplating. No tender-hearted David was he to yearn over a rebellious child, and so far from being softened by his early death, he was the more angered against the relative who had granted him an asylum. Nothing but the complete subjugation or death of Matilda could now satisfy his craving for revenge.

Acting upon the spur of one of his mad impulses, which from youth upwards had mastered his judgment, he gave orders to his generals to be ready for an immediate warlike expedition to Italy.

Nearly sixteen years had passed away since the German forces had been signally defeated by the adroitness of the Great Countess. Henry, whose vindictive nature had remained unchanged and unsoftened by time, had never ceased to regret his futile attempt to entrap his cousin within her native fastnesses. Part of the sting of Conrad's insurrection lay in the fact that but for the recall to Germany which his rebellion necessitated Tuscany might have been added as a jewel to the imperial diadem. During all this while Matilda had enjoyed a period of almost uninterrupted tranquillity. The numerous beneficial undertakings which had been carried out under her direction had wearied even her hardy frame, though she would not acknowledge fatigue. She, however, yielded somewhat less reluctantly than was her wont to the entreaties of her friends in Rome to pay them a visit. In their cheerful society she enjoyed a well-earned

repose from the cares of government, a repose which unfortunately was not of long duration. Unaware that she had given any fresh cause of offence to her irascible cousin, she did not anticipate an immediate renewal of hostilities, though from his uncertainty of purpose she was not altogether unprepared for such a contingency. She had therefore, with a wise prudence created by experience, kept her outlying castles and citadels prepared for the event of a surprise. The inhabitants of many of the towns had become incautious by the long interval of peace and had somewhat relaxed their vigilance. In the absence of the Countess to aid and advise them the panic-stricken people were thrown into a state of hopeless confusion at the news of the threatened invasion and probable investment of their cities. They thought only of their own personal safety, and animated by a desire to conciliate the anger of the dreaded monarch they prepared at his coming to yield a ready submission. Mounted messengers were sent by the more faithful portion of her people to warn Matilda of the approach of the German army and to convey the sad tidings of the disaffection of the citizens. The patriotic couriers hastened with incredible speed along the two hundred miles which lay between Florence and Rome, nor did they rest until they had assured the princess of the pressing need for her presence in Tuscany. With fortitude ready to face all dangers the worthy daughter of a warrior race did not allow herself to be overcome by the news, grave as it appeared. The spirit of her sires awoke within her dauntless breast, and in the hour of danger she displayed a resolute calmness that infused confidence into the fainting hearts of her dependants. Summoning her knights who invariably formed her escort, and cheered by the Apostolic blessing bestowed by the Pontiff, she took her leave and hurried to her marquisate to repel the advance of Henry.

As beneath the genial rays of the springtide sun the dormant buds unfold their beauty, fearless of the keen

blasts which threaten their destruction, so at Matilda's appearance the whole aspect of affairs underwent a wholesome change. The glad tidings of her coming spread with marvellous rapidity, and at the news the terrified peasants ventured forth from the hiding-places to which they had retreated, and patriotism once more resumed its sway. Order and discipline were restored, and the Tuscans, anxious to atone for their previous lack of courage, were loud in their demonstrations of loyalty and attachment.

As the princess rode on horseback at the head of her faithful men-at-arms, the inhabitants, old and young, of all ranks, came forth to meet her. They knelt in the streets as she passed, grateful and happy if they were the proud recipients of a glance or smile from the pious and courageous "Grande Comtessa," as they loved to call her.

Alas! their devotion could not save them from the defeats to which Henry's superior forces exposed them at every turn. Unable to act on the offensive, Matilda was reduced to a series of retreats, drawing from town to town with the enemy close upon her heels.

Onward he came in certain anticipation of victory, spreading desolation and ruin around him. With a reckless disregard of life he devastated the towns and villages that lay in his path until he reached Mantua, where Matilda, who was brought to bay, awaited his attack.

The intrepid Countess, foreseeing that it was impossible for her to muster an army sufficiently strong to arrest Henry's progress, had victualled the city for a prolonged siege. Secure in her retreat she held out as long as eleven, or, according to some chroniclers, thirteen, months, to the chagrin of her cousin, who had not calculated upon this check to his plans.

So strict a watch was kept by Matilda's guards that it was impossible to carry the city by assault, and Henry began to despair of reducing the garrison by famine. Again and again he sent envoys to treat with his refractory

relative, whose resistance drove him nearly mad. She would accept no offer of terms however generously worded, and rejected every proposal which the Mantuans laid before her for an honourable surrender.

After waiting during a whole winter, and seemingly as far as ever from achieving his object, it became apparent to Henry that there was no other way to effect an entrance except by the connivance of traitors within the city. Gold had opened to him the gates of Rome, and he trusted that by the promise of large sums of money there would be found in Mantua also persons who were false to their trust. His emissaries were not stinting in their gifts, and by promise of further supplies succeeded in awakening the cupidity of the sentinels.

In the dead of night, when the wearied inhabitants were enjoying a fitful repose, the traitors crept to the gates and stealthily opened them to admit the enemy. The hoary Chaplain Donizo, who relates at length the history of the siege, was justly indignant at this treachery towards the princess, who "had loaded the city with favours and privileges." He gives vent to the following lamentations which chronicle the event:—

"Fatal treason which precipitates manhood from the summit of its glory to the abyss of shame.

Oh, treason, these are thy works. Thou soilest fidelity, thou soilest virtue.

Mantua, what have you lost?

Formerly filled with good Catholics, thou didst celebrate the Easter of Christ in company with the faithful, and with Matilda, whose generous heart poured out upon thee a rain of benefits.

Now thou dost celebrate the Resurrection of Christ with German heretics, friends of the bottle, and lost in luxury.

Oh, what would not have been thy glory, oh Mantua, if, better advised, thou hadst shut thine ear to the seductions of King Henry!

Thy renown, thine honour, would have filled the universe. People would have called thee 'Mighty,' they would have called thee 'Glorious,' thou wouldst have become immortal.

It is not two years, it is twelve at least, that thou shouldst have braved thy enemies."

Matilda's situation appeared hopeless to all but her own heroic spirit, which did not quail before this crushing misfortune, so great was her trust in the help of Heaven.

Even now she steadily refused to entertain the advice of her friends to make the terms of surrender for which Henry had waited so long. Perceiving that there was no other course open to her except flight, she quietly slipped away from the city in the night, favoured by the darkness and aided by her knights. "At the hour," records Donizo, "when the furious King entered Mantua, the soldiers of Matilda made a sortie. Adversity found then and always the Great Countess firmer than the rock, more indestructible than the diamond. She was rested immovable upon the rock, where God had built His Church. It is in vain she is assailed by waves or beaten by tempests, she does not know how to yield."

After many narrow escapes from being captured by the German spies and outposts, she passed safely through their lines, and crossing the Po reached Ferrara, where she proposed to make a stand.

Reports, which were not altogether unfounded, had reached Matilda that the inhabitants of that city were in revolt and only awaited the advent of Henry to flock to his standard. She was not deterred from her purpose by this unfriendly attitude of her subjects. She guessed intuitively that the disaffection was but temporary, and that it did not spread beyond a few turbulent spirits stirred up by Henry's partizans. She knew that at heart her people loved her, and therefore concluded that her appearance in their midst would cause a reaction in her favour, and she was correct in her estimation of their character. No sooner did she ride up to the gates, which were held by the malcontents, than they were at once thrown open and the populace poured out *en masse*. Rushing up to her horse, they threw themselves on their knees, and with every sign of contrition surrendered unconditionally to her clemency. Everywhere the princess received the

same ovations, and everywhere was greeted with cries of delight. Mindful of the benefits they had received at her hands and those of her ancestors, the people professed their devotion to their Sovereign, and with shouts of defiance to Henry demanded to be led against him.

Matilda soon had occasion to put their loyalty to the test, but with her presence to animate them they were ready to lay down their lives in her defence.

Nothing could withstand such enthusiasm; the example spread rapidly, and there was not a man or a boy but who armed himself in readiness against the aggressor.

Astonished and confounded at so many succeeding reverses, Henry saw the destruction of all his dreams of aggrandisement. By promises of reward or threats of condign punishment he induced his generals to turn and chastise the triumphant Tuscans. They made several spasmodic efforts to retrieve their fallen fortunes, but their movements were invariably followed by signal defeat.

Step by step, in spite of the most strenuous resistance of the King, the invaders were driven back to the foot of the Alps "with such loss of men, of officers, and of treasure as disabled them from any further enterprise."[1] "Matilda might with propriety be designated as 'the powerful,'" says the historian, "since she attained to the plenary dominion over her hereditary estates at the very crisis of the great controversy of her age."

The princess had indeed the supreme satisfaction of recovering the land of her forefathers, and by her courageous defence secured an honourable and lasting peace for her distracted country.

"La grande Comtessa" thus reaped the reward of the confidence she had placed in the faith of her subjects, and with grateful heart she returned thanks to God for the victories which had been achieved with so little loss of life.

This was the King's final venture, and this the last time

[1] Sir James Stephen.

that he, who had been Matilda's enemy for a quarter of a century, was to cross her path. Strange to relate that in the various encounters which had taken place between them during that period the two cousins had never exchanged a word, or, indeed, met face to face, since their parting at Canossa all that long time ago.

No longer called upon to be her people's champion in the field, "the Great Countess" could henceforth devote herself to the development of their social progress. The remainder of her years were, therefore, spent in administering the affairs of her marquisate, and in finding relaxation in the studies in which she was so proficient.

Canossa continued to be Matilda's favourite residence, and here she held her brilliant court, receiving guests of all ranks of life with the majestic dignity that had ever distinguished the ladies of her mother's regal family. She was at this time in the fifty-seventh year of her age, and though she had no premonitory symptoms of immediate decease, she began, with the foresight peculiar to her nature, to provide for that event which falleth to the lot of all. She made additional and munificent grants to the institutions she had founded for the reception of the aged and infirm, and for the relief of the necessitous. Nor were the young and gifted of her people forgotten in this distribution of her wealth. She gave large sums for their training in the principles of their religion, and liberally provided for the education of those who displayed any aptitude for learning.

Henry had, by his evil courses and personal animosity, long alienated the affections of his cousin and destroyed the last remnant of trust in his honour. She realised the fearful consequences to her people, whose future she had so much at heart, were he to assert himself heir to the marquisate. She viewed with horror the power for evil which such an event would be for Italy and the Church, and employed her legislative talents to avert such a misfortune. Her anxiety was to provide against disputes which might at her death arise

between the King and the Pontiff as to the disposal of her property, and which would afford Henry a pretext for war. She exhausted the resources of her fertile brain for a solution of the difficulty, and finally decided to follow the course she had pursued in the reign of the preceding Pope—that of making a public ratification during her lifetime of the gift she had already made of her estates to the Church. By taking this precaution she secured the independence of her provinces from German control, and evinced her love for the Holy See by strengthening the hands of the Pontiffs.[1] Again the donation was disputed by the King, "on the ground that most of the fiefs given by the Countess were appendages of the imperial authority. These rival pretensions were a new spark of war between the papacy and the empire."[2] Henry's late defeats in Italy and recurring revolts at home rendered him this time unable to gain his point by attacking Matilda. He therefore contented himself with the utterances of threats of the punishment which before long he intended to inflict upon the Pope and upon his cousin. Moreover, he was at this juncture placed in a desperate situation, from which he seemed unable to extricate himself, and in which his pride and self-love were acutely wounded.

The nobles, weary of his tyranny and impiety, gladly welcomed any leader who would embrace their cause, and such a one was found in the royal household. Scarcely had the King avenged himself for the rebellion of Conrad than his second son placed himself at the head of the rebels and entered the lists against him. Henry had caused the youth, who was his favourite and namesake, and who, in many respects, closely resembled himself, to be crowned at Aix-

[1] Fifteen years after "the Great Countess" had passed to her rest, Pope Innocent II., on the coronation of Lothair, "transferred the bequest to the Emperor for his lifetime, on payment of one hundred pounds, to the Pontiff and his successors. Even this stipulation was not a lasting one, and after a long-continued struggle the greater part of the gift was by arrangement ceded to the Church."

[2] Chevalier D'Artaud de Montor.

la-Chapelle ere he had reached the age of nineteen. This unusual step was taken in order to exclude Conrad, the proscribed heir, from succeeding to the crown he had attempted to wrest from his father. The King reserved to himself the rights and power of royalty during his lifetime, and, warned by experience, caused the prince to take a solemn oath that he would not interfere in the affairs of the kingdom until after his father's death.

This public acknowledgment of young Henry as next in succession was a great mistake, and served, if not to create, at least to awaken in his breast feelings of pride and personal jealousy of the King.

During the six years which had elapsed since his coronation he had greedily coveted the "glittering emblems of royalty," and looked forward with almost feverish eagerness to the time when the crown should grace his brow and he should indeed be King—nay, more, Emperor of the West. This aspiring young prince, now in his twenty-third year, is described by a contemporary as being "of a remarkably handsome appearance and full of manly enterprise." Among the many enemies which his father had made for himself Henry had no lack of partizans, and in a short time he found the greater part of the army at his command. He was fully aware of his father's waning popularity, and of the slender grasp with which he held the sceptre, and this made him the more determined to secure the prize for himself. The oath he had taken was disregarded, the plaudits of the multitude extinguished the last gleam of filial affection, and hushed the warning note which his brother's fate should have sounded in his ear. So intent was he on seizing the royal prerogative that no means, however cowardly or unjustifiable, were left untried in order to attain his end.

When the King returned from the scene of his defeat in Tuscany he found his subjects in open revolt. He was not possessed of much depth of feeling, but he loved his son with

all the affection of which he was capable. That he, of all his children, should turn against him was a source not of mere chagrin but of real unfeigned sorrow in which anger found no place. Instead of resorting to arms he resolved to make a personal appeal to his rebellious child, and with this pacific idea appointed a place of meeting not far from Coblentz, on the banks of the Moselle.

When young Henry, in all the pride and beauty of early manhood, and elated with a new sense of power, appeared before him, the unhappy King flung himself to the earth in an agony of grief and shame. "Oh, my son, my son!" exclaimed the stricken monarch, in faltering accents which sobs and tears of bruised affection rendered almost inaudible. "My son, my son, if I am to be punished by God for my sins, at least stain not thine honour, for it is unseemly in a son to sit in judgment over his father's sins."

At the sight of his parent kneeling as a suppliant before him, the prince's better nature awoke within him. He appeared to be overcome by remorse and contrition. Raising the prostrate King from his humble position, he begged his forgiveness, and with a friendly caress took leave of the weeping monarch.

Henry himself, in a letter which he wrote to Philip I. of France, whose long and inglorious reign was nearing its close, thus describes the interview with his son: "As soon as I saw him I was affected to the very bottom of my heart, as much by paternal affection as by sorrow. I threw myself at his feet, supplicating and conjuring him, in the name of his God, his religion and the salvation of his soul, although my sins might have merited punishment from God, to abstain from sullying on my account his hands, his soul and his honour, for never law, human or divine, had authorised sons to be the avengers of the faults of their fathers." [1]

Alas! ambition and the influence of self-seeking counsellors soon changed the prince's feelings. On their representations

[1] Sismondi.

he repented that he had allowed his father to go free, and now gave orders for his immediate arrest and imprisonment. No sooner had the King congratulated himself upon the success of his meeting with his son than he was surrounded and hurried off to prison. His gaolers were deaf to all his promises to reward them if he were set at liberty, and endeavoured "by vigorous and harsh treatment to compel him to sign his own abdication."

Driven from his throne, Henry quitted Germany and wandered about Flanders for several months, often so poor that he was forced to seek relief from the Church, whose enemy he had been. "Never in the days of history," remarks Donizo, "has human pride, the abuse of power, the combination of tyranny and weakness, been punished by more cruel degradation."

His son-in-law, Frederick, on whom he had bestowed the duchy of Suabia, vacant by the death of Rudolph, made an attempt to rally the German princes round the fallen King, but his efforts were in vain. Henry's mis-used authority had departed for ever. The obsequious and excommunicated prelates, who held their benefices by simony, deserted his cause and stood aloof from the monarch who had befriended them. Of all those whom he had loaded with favours not one came forward to offer him a shelter or to administer to his necessities.

## CHAPTER XIV

"O thou voice within my breast!
Why entreat me, why upbraid me
When the steadfast tongues of truth
And the flattering hopes of youth
Have all deceived me and betrayed me?
Give me, give me rest, O, rest!"

LONGFELLOW.

IN Italy there was one who, had she known of the straits to which her relative was reduced, would with generous and forgiving spirit have come to his aid. As the Great Countess had given a home to Conrad, the exiled heir to the German throne, so now her womanly sympathy would prompt her to offer a hospitable asylum to his father, who, by a strange retribution, had also been deprived of his crown. However unwilling the Tuscans would be to have in their midst the monarch who had caused them so much tribulation, for Matilda's sake they would pay to him that deference due to the rank of the humbled sovereign. She "whose whole life was one unvaried example of virtue, justice, benevolence and truth," by her well-earned influence with the Holy See, would have procured for him the solace of reconciliation with the Church, and the consolations of religion in his dying hours. Banished from the hollow pomps and vanities of Court life, his heart might even yet respond to his cousin's kindly administrations, and his painful history thus have had a happier ending. Matilda, however, was in ignorance of the extent of Henry's misfortunes, for although flying reports had reached her of his deposition, she could scarcely give credit to the wild rumours which were spread broadcast with regard to her unfortunate kinsman.

In Germany, also, there yet remained a firm and faithful

friend, of whom mention has not yet been made in this memoir, who, had he been aware of the King's poverty, would gladly have relieved him—one who had endeavoured by his counsels and warnings to restrain the sacrilegious hands which seized upon the Church's revenues. "When the seals and crosses of the deceased prelates and Abbots were delivered to the King, and by him sold to the highest bidder, this fearless monitor, himself above bribes, not only refused to sanction such proceedings, but openly denounced the sin of which the monarch was guilty." This was Otho, his Chancellor, who for years had stood by Henry's side and "laboured to bring his prince to sentiments of repentance and submission."

In Otho, who was afterwards canonised, the King admired those virtues in which he himself was singularly deficient. "Resolved to make choice at least of one good Bishop," he nominated the Chancellor to the See of Bamburg in 1103. The offer, however, was not accepted by the prelate-elect until he had journeyed to Rome to have his consecration ratified and to receive the insignia of his office at the hands of Pope Pascal II. "Such is the power of meekness in disarming the fierce tyrant," continues the historian, "that Henry's successor to the throne and to his antagonism to the reigning Pontiffs also inherited his esteem for the good old Bishop who so fearlessly adhered to the Holy See."[1]

The dethroned monarch, abandoned by his nobles and courtiers, appears to have retired to Flanders, where, according to report, he spent his time "in intriguing against the Pope, and in scheming plans by which to regain his throne."

He died at length in poverty at Liège, at the age of fifty-six, with no friendly voice to soothe his passage to the grave, and unfortified by the consolations of his religion.

His last act was a magnanimous one, and his last words

[1] Alban Butler.

were those of forgiveness to his son, "to whom he sent the sword and ring, which even in his days of direst poverty he still retained as a token of his love."

No royal ceremonies were observed at his obsequies, nor did his unfilial child make even an outward show of sorrow and regret by attending the funeral of the parent he had dethroned. He was buried in a stone coffin in unconsecrated ground and without the rites of the Church from which he had separated himself by an impenetrable wall of pride and self-will.

At the time of his death (7th August 1106) Henry had reigned nearly fifty years, thirty of which had been spent in conflict with Rome and Tuscany, struggles in which both the Church and Matilda remained masters of the field.

Thus passed away the scion of a noble race of warriors, and the unworthy descendant of Charlemagne. Thus was laid low, by his own perfidy, a head which, but for his insensate folly, would have worn the imperial diadem. Let charity cast a veil over the closing scenes of a life replete with the faults peculiar to his nature, but which a judicious education might have checked if not entirely eradicated. "His virtues, which were few," says his biographer, "were his own, and his failings, which were many, were the result of his early training and belonged to the age in which he lived." Let us remember only the bravery and tenacity of purpose which he displayed in his campaigns, qualities which in a more civilised century might have made him one of the ablest monarchs of his race and a leader worthy of respect.

Henry's was a contradictory character, and throughout his life he exemplified the force of his favourite saying: "Men have much and varied knowledge, but no one is thoroughly acquainted with himself." This axiom was proved by the courageous yet servile King, who though always disputing the authority of the Church never denied her tenets. "He believed, but lived as if he believed not, or as if he believed in a Gospel contrary to her teaching."

# Henry V

From the little that was known of the proud and wilful character of Henry's successor, it was feared that he would adopt the same line of offensive policy towards the Holy See. From a son who deposed and imprisoned his own father the Church could not hope for filial reverence, and subsequent events proved that the Vicar of Christ was not wrong in his anticipations of evil.

No sooner was the breath out of Henry's body than the prince, aware that his right to the throne was now incontestable, dispatched an embassy to the Pope, apprising him of his accession and demanding to be crowned Emperor at an early date. "I promise," writes the newly-made King, "to obey the Church as a Mother and the Pontiff as a well-beloved Father." These sentiments of piety and obedience would have been gladly hailed by Pascal had they proceeded from any other source. "But expressed at such a time, and following so quickly upon their author's cruel treatment of his father, they did not bear the impress of truth."

All good feeling, however, was not dead within the breast of the young monarch. In his heart there beat a chivalrous respect for the character of the "Great Countess," which determined him to seek and secure her friendship. The envoys to the Pontiff, therefore, had instructions to stop at Canossa on their way to Rome. They were the trusted bearers of a special message to the princess, assuring her of their King's pacific intentions towards herself, and promising in his name to regard her marquisate as the territory of a friend and ally.

While Henry was being sent forth into the world a solitary wanderer, deprived of his crown by the child of his affections, Matilda, happy amongst her people, "obeyed with respect and served with love," was making plans to secure the independence of her country. The downfall of her cousin, who with all his faults had been so dear to her mother, was a matter of no small grief to her. His death, so far from being considered as a relief, was, under the dis-

tressing circumstances in which it had taken place, a source of unfeigned sorrow to her pious heart. She trembled lest the prince who had commenced his reign by an act of rebellion should be driven by severity to follow the same path of blind self-will. Henry was now about the age his father had been when he first resisted the authority of the Church, and Matilda feared lest the anathema pronounced upon the father should descend upon the son. For his mother's sake, and in memory of the ill-fated Conrad, she yearned to be good friends with her young kinsman.

While the ambassadors from Germany were on their way to Canossa, Pascal had already arrived at the castle, he having come thither on a short visit to the Countess; this was Matilda's opportunity to speak of the matter which lay so near her heart. As once before she had knelt to implore Gregory's forgiveness for the late King, so now again she bent her proud knee to Pascal, to beg that the sins of the father might not be visited upon the son. She prayed the Pontiff to look with lenient eye upon the errors of the youthful monarch, and to trust to time and experience to subdue the waywardness which had led to the ruin of his sire.

Acting on the advice which she thus proffered in the form of a plea, Pascal not only promised to take no immediate action, but even in time to confer on him the imperial title, which Matilda prayed that he might merit.

Like his predecessors, the Pope recognised the value of such a faithful adherent as the Countess. Like them, too, he placed unlimited reliance upon the stability of her opinions, and "referred to her in all questions affecting the civil government." His consultation with her prepared him to consider favourably Henry's impending claim to the imperial crown, and he assured her that on his return to Rome he would communicate with the King on the subject. The ambassadors from Germany arrived, however, ere he had left Canossa, and were enabled to present to him the credentials with which they were charged. They were agreeably sur-

prised at the gracious reception accorded to them by the Countess, and aware of her influence with the Holy See, considered the Pontiff's presence as an augury of success to their mission.

Unfortunately, Pascal's nervous temperament gained the ascendency over his courage, and he now hesitated on his own responsibility to comply with the King's desire. In an evasive reply he overthrew all Matilda's arguments, which had appeared so weighty but a short time before. To her inexpressible disappointment he stated that he would convene a Synod early in the following year to consider the matter, and with this unsatisfactory ending to their interview the envoys were forced to remain content. With many expressions of respect they engaged for their monarch that he should be prepared to come to Rome at the end of six months to abide by the Pontiff's decision.

Matilda, who never dreamed of such a frustration of her hopes, was amazed at this instance of vacillation on the part of Pascal. She trusted, however, that on reflection he would give a more definite answer to Henry's courteously-worded request. In order to give him an opportunity of reconsidering his message, the Countess invited the no less disappointed ambassadors to remain at the castle until the following day. But the morning brought no further change in the Pontiff's determination to refer the matter to his council, and the envoys, filled with wonder at the magnificence of Matilda's Court, and "laden with presents," retired well pleased with the hospitality she had afforded them.

They had, however, reckoned without their King, whose restless spirit would brook no such delay and uncertainty. He despatched three embassies, one after the other, to expedite matters with the Pope, who had returned to Rome, and each brought back a repetition of the message delivered to the envoys at Canossa.

With an impatience which justified Matilda's fears for his loyalty to the Holy See, Henry made preparations for an

incursion into Italy, determined at the point of the sword to obtain from the Pontiff the right of wielding the imperial sceptre. To one of Pascal's sensitive disposition the prospect of a prolonged siege was so formidable that to escape from the horrors his timorous mind depicted he suddenly retired to France. Philip I., whose reign of nearly half a century was drawing to its close, had been reconciled to the Church, from which his immorality had separated him, and evinced his contrition by extending the hand of welcome to the exile. Secure in the protection of the King from the violence of Henry, the Pontiff convened in his refuge various Councils, and in them boldly confirmed the laws issued by his predecessors against simony and investiture.

Henry, having apparently abandoned his project of invading Italy, Pascal, relieved of his fears, returned to Rome (1108), after an absence of nearly two years. So great were the rejoicings of the people at his home-coming, and so threatening their attitude towards the anti-pope, the late Abbot of Farfa, that he fled precipitately from the throne on which he had been placed by the late King of Germany. Like his master he ended his days in exile and poverty, but unlike him he had the consolation of being reconciled to the Church. He begged and obtained the Pontiff's forgiveness ere he passed away, "lamenting with his dying breath the crimes of which he avowed himself guilty."

Restored to his throne, Pascal naturally looked forward to a peaceful pontificate devoted to the development of Church goverment and to the cause of religion. Alas! his tranquillity was but of short duration. Henry had not abandoned, but only deferred, his project, probably from unwillingness to offend the French monarch, under whose protection the Pontiff had placed himself. No sooner had Pascal somewhat arranged affairs at St Peter's, when the news that the King was at the city gates, for the purpose of being crowned as Emperor, fell like a bombshell upon the panic-stricken Pope.

# Henry V. in Italy

During Pascal's exile Henry had been pushing forward his preparations, and so promptly were they executed, that before warning could be sent to the Pontiff the German army, with the King at the head, had crossed the frontier. His friendly overtures to Matilda had been accepted by her in such good faith that she no longer kept her subjects in readiness to act on the defensive, and she was therefore totally unprepared for war. Before she could organise any resistance to Henry's approach he was already on his way to Rome. With remarkable consideration for the Countess he had made a detour in order to avoid the damage to her cultivated lands, which the passing of a large army must necessarily entail. It was evident to all that the King sincerely desired the friendship of the princess, and he threatened his men with instant death for any violation of her property. The Tuscans had serious cause to be grateful for this concession, for their neighbours did not fare as well at Henry's hands; while his soldiers respected the cities which belonged to Matilda, the towns and castles of those who opposed the march of the German forces were delivered over to flame and pillage. Devastation and ruin marked Henry's track, and the inhabitants who escaped from the burning villages created a widespread panic by their vivid descriptions of the horrors they had undergone. Convulsed with terror, the fortified towns on the way to Rome opened their gates without attempting any defence against the passage of the incensed monarch, who passed proudly on his way to the Capitol.

It was impossible, under the circumstances, for the Pope to resist the King's demand for an interview. But though brought to bay in his own palace, he proved that he had the courage of his convictions—a courage which, alas! was but too evanescent. In spite of the monarch's menaces and defiant attitude Pascal would not comply with his desire unless he first pledged himself to renounce the right of conferring ecclesiastical investitures. The King replied by filling

the hall with his soldiers, a step which he calculated would overawe the Pontiff, whose timidity was but too apparent. Finding that Pascal, although on the verge of fainting, remained firm to his resolve, Henry gave orders for his arrest, and also that of such "Cardinals, Bishops and nobles as were distinguished for their attachment to the Holy See." "Many of the clergy," we are told, "were shamefully treated, the silver censers wrenched from their hands and their splendid vestments torn off their backs."

Two exceptions he made for Matilda's sake; these were the Bishops of Piacenza and Reggio, whom he released and treated with more deference than he paid to the Head of that Church to which he professed to belong.

Closely guarded by the soldiers, the captives were marched off to the camp without the walls of Rome, there to be detained until they should agree to the terms the King dictated.

The Romans, almost beside themselves with wrath at the imprisonment of the Pontiff by the German King, gathered in large crowds in the vicinity of St Peter's, gesticulating wildly and threatening the imperial troops. The latter, goaded at length into retaliation, surrounded some of the aggressors, and were soon engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with the infuriated citizens, and for a time the result appeared to be uncertain. Henry, on hearing the uproar, quickly appeared upon the scene of the disorder and, at the head of his personal attendants, cleared a passage through the crowd and came, not any too soon, to the assistance of his soldiers. Standing up in his stirrups, he charged the mob with his lance, and after "transfixing as many as five at one time" received a blow in the face which caused him to reel and fall off his horse. It seemed, to the observers, that Henry's career was ended, and but for the timely aid of a noble of Milan it certainly would have been. Had not the knight assisted him to mount his own horse he would probably have been torn to pieces and his flesh thrown to the

dogs, the horrible fate which, according to an historian, actually overtook his generous preserver.[1]

The imperial forces, maddened by witnessing the fall of their leader, savagely attacked the populace, whom they drove back at the point of their spears.

Undeterred by their repulse, the Romans mustered together in large bodies and ventured as far as the German encampment, and during the night made several brave but fruitless attempts to release the Pontiff and his companions. The King, fearing lest Pascal should escape, caused him, together with his friends in misfortune, to be removed to a strong fortress about thirty miles from the city. Here they were immured, we learn, until Pascal became so ill that his fellow-prisoners, fearing that longer confinement would cost him his life, besought him to yield to Henry's demands.

A thrill of horror ran throughout Italy and Germany when Henry's audacious act became known. "Even the simoniacal prelates and priests, who held their posts by favour of the crown, hung aloof from him, and no German Bishops repaired to the King except Conrad, Archbishop of Saltzberg."

After fifty-five days of imprisonment (from February to April 1109) the Pope, more from sympathy for his companions than from fear of his own safety, signified his intention to come to a compromise. Permission was granted to Henry to give investiture, with the ring and crosier, to Bishops and Abbots of his kingdom, "*provided that the election was free and not effected by simony.*" "There is no heresy," says Baronius, "in making the reserved concession to which Pascal consented. But to maintain that it is of right, and to declare that laymen ought to give investiture—which Pascal never did—would be heresy. In such wise a false dogma would be introduced into the Church repugnant to recognised customs, to the sacred institutions of the Fathers,

[1] *Hildebrand and His Times*, by W. R. W. Stephens, M.A.

and to the opinions of many writers who have defended Pascal."

The King, however, declared himself satisfied with this half victory and made a triumphal entry into Rome with Pascal, who already repented of his concession. The presence of the German troops alone prevented the indignant citizens from giving vent to the anger which consumed them, and in silence the procession slowly wended its way to St Peter's.

The King, after taking the oath to "defend the Church against all men," was then crowned, and content with having attained his wish, took respectful leave of the Pontiff, whom he had treated thus summarily.

"The monarch," remarks the historian, "forced by the very power of the Holy See to kneel before his victim, who crowned him, displayed at once the right of the Holy See and the sentiment of pardon which animated the Pontiff."

Although the theologians of the time defended his action in the matter, Pascal himself was, as the chronicles remind us, "his own severe judge," and to the end of his reign he endeavoured "by subjecting himself to austere penances to repair his error." Council after council was convened, and at each of these decrees were passed against investiture, but alas! at the threatened appearance of Henry the courage of the Pope gave way and they were withdrawn. Pascal's death, in January 1118, just nine years later, ended his vacillating policy, and his pontifical burden slipped from his weary shoulders for ever.

## CHAPTER XV

"She left off breathing, and no more
I smoothed the pillow beneath her head;
Like violets faded were her eyes,
By this we knew that she was dead;
And the wind was like the sound of wings,
As if angels came to bear her away;
Ah! when I saw and felt these things
I found it difficult to stay."
LONGFELLOW.

IN Tuscany the news of the Pope's imprisonment caused universal consternation, and the Great Countess, who had so warmly upheld the dignity of the papal throne, was justly indignant at the treatment to which Pascal had been subjected. Ere she could make definite arrangements to come to his succour a heavier blow fell upon her, from the crushing effects of which her health and spirits never recovered. At first she received with incredulity the reports which reached her of the Pope's yielding the point for which his predecessors had suffered and died. A message from Henry, however, conveying the news of his coronation and of his intention to pay her a visit on his way home to Germany, placed the matter beyond all possibility of doubt.

As soon as the lengthy ceremonials were ended, the Emperor, elated with his newly-acquired dignity, proceeded to Tuscany to make the acquaintance of his mother's friend.

Uncertain how events had ended in Rome, for Henry was on his way ere the couriers had been despatched by the Pontiff to apprise her of what had happened, Matilda had no assurance whether her relative came in the character of friend or foe. She, therefore, as a precautionary measure,

awaited his arrival at Canossa, where the late King had performed his world-renowned penance.

Perhaps his son was reminded of this abasement of human pride as between the rugged hills the stronghold came in sight. Whilst the weary horses slowly and painfully toiled up the steep craggy ascent from the village he had leisure to picture the expedition undertaken by his parents more than thirty years before. Many times had the Emperor, when a boy, stood at his mother's knee and heard with unwearied interest the harrowing details of that fearful journey.

Arrived at the summit of the rock upon which the castle was built, Henry paused, and with keen interest gazed upon the wonderful panorama of mountain and lowland which lay spread out in all its vastness before him. Not since the days when his ancestor, Otto, had been the honoured guest of its founder, had a German Emperor been permitted to pass into the precincts of the citadel, and Henry was unable to conjecture, from the absence of military challenge, as to what reception awaited him. As he went into the inner enclosure there appeared before his mind the figure of his late father standing there in the winter's cold, a suppliant for the honour the son had wrested from the feeble hands of the custodian of St Peter's Keys.

He found Matilda in the midst of a bevy of maidens, engaged in animated discussion with the nobles and learned men of the day who frequented her Court. The susceptible young Emperor could not fail to be struck with admiration at the noble type of womanhood before him. He realised that he was in the presence of the princess whose riches, beauty and attainments had deservedly won for her a European reputation. Her tall and upright form was displayed to advantage as she rose to receive her guest with that dignified yet winning manner which had made her pre-eminently the most popular ruler of her age. The sixty-three years which had passed over Matilda had left no furrows to tell of

the troubles and misfortunes which they had brought in their train. She was still beautiful and retained, in a wonderful degree, that regal courtesy by which she so strongly impressed her personality upon the beholders.

Long and almost reverently Henry gazed upon the straight and regular features which had been so often described to him by the grateful Bertha. He noted the broad smooth brow from which the hair, whitened with years and sorrow, was drawn back and confined by a coronet, round which it was gathered about her shapely head. Her dark eyes had lost somewhat of their fire, but from them still shone forth, when roused, the spirit of her sires. They were subdued now to a sad thoughtfulness, and tears trembled on their lashes as she looked upon the manly figure of her impetuous young relative, the only tie of blood which remained to her. Her dress, like everything which surrounded the Countess, was elegant, and displayed in its arrangement the artistic taste of the wearer. It was made of costly material according to the fashion of the day, and was unadorned except by pearls, truly symbolical of her chastity and goodness.

Henry was charmed with the gracious bearing of "La Grande Comtessa," with whose personal attractions and military skill report had made him familiar but whom he now beheld for the first time. The conversation of the princess equally delighted and entranced the Emperor, whose intellect was of no mean order. He was not sufficiently acquainted with Italian to express his thoughts fluently in that language, and therefore spoke in German. Matilda's patriotism, however, was undiminished by time and age and would allow her, as she smilingly explained, to answer him in no other than her native tongue. This direct evidence of her love for Italy, far from displeasing Henry, enabled him to understand the intensity of that devotion against which as against a rock his father had hurled himself in vain.

The Emperor was astonished, as were all strangers, at the

refinement of Matilda's home, and viewed with interest the valuable collection of antiquities, both Greek and Roman, which the castle contained. Fortunately, Canossa had escaped the ravaging hand of the marauders, and the priceless library and sculptures remained unscathed to bear witness to her wealth and artistic talent. The purity of her Court and its entire freedom from the debauchery which characterised the castles of the great in those days appealed to Henry's better nature. The lesson was not lost upon him, and he resolved on his return to Germany to people his palace with a more virtuous assemblage than had hitherto found encouragement there.

Germans and Italians alike have ever been noted as musical people, and the Emperor listened spell-bound with delight to the singing of Matilda's choir, in which the Tuscan voices blended in sweet and soul-stirring harmony.

With so much to engage and rivet his attention, Henry was loth to depart and was very easily persuaded to prolong so pleasant a visit.

Like all who approached the "Great Countess", he was fascinated by that indescribable personality peculiar to her, and which invariably commanded the respect and esteem of those who were admitted to her society. Nor was this merely a passing influence, which like a magnet drew Henry towards her, for "his heart went forth with almost filial love" to the noble woman who had suffered so much at the hands of the late King. "The hardened Emperor who had seen his father a kneeling suppliant unmoved, was struck with admiration, and from that time gave her no other name than that of '*ma mère.*'"[1]

Sitting at her side and listening to the melodious sound of her voice, the young monarch sought in vain for a reason for his father's enmity towards so beautiful and pure a woman. He thought with shame of his relentless pursuit of the brave lady, and could not but envy and wonder at the

[1] W. R. W. Stephens, M.A.

adroitness with which she had eluded his grasp. Had the two cousins met, he mused, under more favourable circumstances than at the hour of humiliation, the monarch's nobler nature would have been awakened and he would have been saved from himself. Directing his thoughts into other channels than those of vice and revenge he would have been a popular and happy king and father, and have left behind a name revered and honoured by his posterity.

Henry called to mind also, with a feeling of self-upbraiding, that it was the Countess who had sheltered his brother Conrad when dying in exile for the fault, the example of which he himself had followed.

Thus meditated the Emperor, as, with a regretful retrospect of his own unfilial conduct, he listened to the silvery tones in which, in soft cadence, Matilda made melody of her native tongue.

During the three days of his stay at Canossa Henry entered into an agreement with the princess, in which he not only promised to respect her territories but also named her his "Vicegerent" in Lombardy. For years the restless inhabitants of that province had harassed and annoyed the Tuscans and involved them in quarrels and reprisals leading to loss of life and property on both sides. It had been their custom in the name of Germany to make depredatory incursions demanding men and money to further the imperial cause. The Emperor had now become Matilda's ally, and she had his full consent to deal summarily with the malignants who infringed upon her rights.

Henry's visit was thus the beginning of a brighter epoch for the Countess. Relieved from all fear of foreign invasion she was now free to relax her long-sustained vigilance. She was at liberty for the first time for years to give her thoughts to peaceful pursuits and to pass the remainder of her life in works of public and private benevolence.

"Masculine of understanding though Matilda undoubtedly

was, she deserved the description in no other sense," and contemporaries unite in describing her as being of a wonderfully compassionate and sweet nature. "With the blood of warriors and heroes in her veins," as Donizo reminds us, "she was gifted with a strong physique and a splendid constitution. Sometimes defeated, but more often victorious in the battles in which, from her youth up, she had been engaged she retained throughout that graciousness which endeared her to all. She never for a moment lost the gentleness of pure womanhood which was one of her principal charms and which caused the children to cling fondly to her," as to one whose nature was as loving and guileless as their own. The instinctive power of forming a rapid judgment peculiar to childhood taught these little ones to gauge with truthful certainty the "depth of tenderness that lay in their Sovereign's breast." "It was her noble ambition," remarks Sir James Stephen," to be the refuge of the oppressed, the benefactor of the miserable, and the champion of what she deemed the cause of truth." Never was cry of woe unheeded by this true-hearted Christian who had been herself purified in the cleansing furnace of trial. From her table she fed the hungry, and from her bounteous purse she relieved the indigent. She sought out the afflicted, and consoled them in their sorrows. She brought the sunshine and the courage which her presence inspired to the bedsides of the sick, whom she carefully tended and nourished. She comforted the dying peasants, and allayed the anxieties which haunted their last hours by promises of relief to their families. Holding the emblem of their salvation before their glazing eyes, she whispered into their ears words of prayer, of consolation, and of hope.

No wonder that the memory of Matilda's beauty, courage, learning, riches and charity endeared her to the grateful Italians, ever so responsive to the chord of affection.

Years after she had passed away they spoke of her by

their humble hearths and many a legend was woven around the name of "La Grande Comtessa."[1]

As a ripple in the water will widen and expand until it reaches the farther shore, so will the influence of Matilda's exemplary life of virtue and of charity extend to future ages as an illustration of the words of our Divine Lord, "She hath done what she could." While her acts of heroism and patriotic fervour have secured the admiration and love of her countrymen for all time, in heaven also will her memorial be found. Her name, untarnished by personal motives, will be inscribed in letters of gold by the angels who record the actions of those "good and faithful servants" who desire "to enter into the joy of their Lord."

Her piety was the source of her strength, and it was this which endued her with courage to bear with equanimity the ills to which her birth in a period of turmoil and strife exposed her. Her troubles and the many trials which were hidden from mortal eye never depressed her, and to the very last the family chronicler records her unfailing cheerfulness.

Living in the midst of a semi-barbaric and sensuous age, she kept aloof from its temptations and seductions, and by her purity and unselfishness has left a pattern for us to imitate.

In the calm evening of declining age Matilda had leisure to connect the links of memory and to ponder over the events of her active career. The retrospect enabled her to realise with gratitude the care with which Providence had

[1] The following narrative, entitled "Water for Bald Heads," which appeared in the *Shanghai Times* for 25th August 1902, nearly eight centuries after Matilda's death, may serve as an example of the manner in which her history has been blended with the marvellous. In this story bald-headed people are advised "to go to Casciana in North Italy to test the virtues of its waters, which are reputed to be natural hair-restorers, equally capable of restoring hair to the bald and plumage to naked birds." There is a tradition that in the eleventh century the pet blackbird of the Countess Matilda had lost all its feathers, but recovered its plumage after bathing in the marshes of Casciana. The bird's example was followed by the ladies of her Court, whose hair was greatly increased in quantity and beauty, and whose bodies became stronger and more youthful.

guided her steps in the tortuous paths through which he had been safely led.

There was one thing, however, which saddened her thoughts, and which she desired to have altered ere she passed "into the valley of the shadow of death." The remains of her cousin Henry, unforgiven by the Church he had robbed and insulted, yet lay in unconsecrated ground Though for the last thirty years of his life he had been her unrelenting enemy, she could not forget that her mother had loved him and that his faithful Queen had clung to him until death silenced the throbbings of her aching heart. The friendship which the young Emperor had so freely extended awoke within her breast the feelings of kinship, and she had a wish that his father's body should no longer remain dishonoured, but be placed by the side of the patient Bertha.

With the magnanimity which was one of her characteristics the Countess made an appeal to Pascal on behalf of her relative, and besought him to remove the Papal interdict. The entreaty, coming from such a source, could not fail to obtain a hearing, and the Pontiff yielded to her request. The princess at once apprised the faithful Otho, Bishop of Bamburg, who had long lamented the excommunication of his King, that the sentence was remitted.

The remains of the deceased monarch, which for five years had rested in a stone coffin, were therefore removed from unhallowed ground and conveyed to the imperial vault of his ancestors. This was in the Cathedral of Spires, which had been built on the site of a temple of Venus by Conrad, the founder of the dynasty.

Slowly the procession, with the body of the late King in its midst, wended its way through the streets by which thirty-five years previously he had stolen as a fugitive to Canossa. The awe-struck and silent crowd regarded with sorrowful interest the coffin which contained the forgiven child of the Church, to whose tender bosom he was at

length restored and whose prayers would now be offered for him.

On its way to the high altar, before which the obsequies were about to be celebrated, the *cortège* passed by the effigies of former sovereigns, including that of Henry III. of pious memory. To the onlookers their gaze appeared to rest with stony severity upon the Emperor who in his haste to grasp the crown, had stricken his father to the grave.

With all the ceremonial due to his rank the body of Henry IV. found a resting-place by the side of his Queen, who had been mercifully spared the knowledge of her husband's downfall.

Probably Matilda was one of the truest mourners of the late monarch, and before her altar at Canossa her pious heart echoed with fervour the prayers which far away in Germany were being said over his remains. The voids in her life caused by the death of her early friends and counsellors had never been filled, and she was beginning to feel the weight of her years. The arduous duties of her government, which she discharged with the utmost exactitude, began to fatigue the hardy frame, which had hitherto responded so willingly to the incessant demands upon its strength. The valiant Countess, who for more than forty years had wielded the sword in defence of Church and country, was suddenly, to the consternation of all, laid upon a bed of sickness.

The hoary family chaplain, overcome by emotion at the sight of Matilda's suffering, allows his feelings to be shown in the ejaculatory verses, of which the following is a free translation. In them he predicts the misfortunes which will follow when the illness of the princess is made public.

"It is for the glory of thy Church, O Christ, that Matilda has fought impious princes and rebellious towns.
But now the news that she is ill gives hope to the wicked.
Matilda is ill! O Lord Christ, hear us! God have mercy on us in our distress! Give life and health to our noble lady Matilda.
Who will shelter the naked? who will protect the labourer and his plough? who will assure him of his harvest?

Who will give shelter to the poor traveller? who will defend the poor sailor against the pirates? Who will build churches?
The lords so humbled before her will now have all power. The thief will join to thief, wolf to wolf, lion to lion.
There will be no one to defend us.
To-day I have seen the flowers upon the earth, what will become of them to-morrow?
Matilda is sick and feeble and the cruel Mantuans haste to rebellion."

Crowds of anxious inquirers daily toiled up the steep ascent to the outer courtyard of Matilda's birthplace waiting for news, and at last it was whispered from mouth to mouth that the "Great Countess" was dead.

Donizo was right in his forebodings as to the faithlessness of the inhabitants of "La Gloriosa." No sooner did the report reach them than, in their eagerness to earn the good opinion of the Emperor, they immediately rose in revolt against the officers of Matilda and the whole city was in a tumult. The princess, whose courage neither age nor illness had dimmed, heard the news with just indignation against the offenders. She rose from her sick-bed and, though at the expense of much personal suffering, proceeded to the scene of the disturbance. Great was the consternation of the rebels when they saw the princess whom they believed to be dead, riding slowly towards the city. Peace and order were restored as if by magic, and the people poured forth to meet the ailing Countess and to beg her forgiveness. They flung the gates wide open to receive her, and the malcontents, who had been emboldened by the rumours of her death, submitted without a blow.

Overcome by pain and weakness Matilda regarded the delinquents with glances of severity which they certainly deserved, but which were entirely foreign to her sweet countenance. So unusual was it for her to have a frowning brow that, filled with apprehension of condign punishment, the Mantuans flung themselves on their knees. "Pardon, pardon for our offences!" they cried. "Thou seest our gates

open before thee, and we are ready to take oath that we will not offend again."

Moved to tears at the sight of their evident distress and contrition, Matilda forgave them unconditionally and sent them to their homes much relieved in mind at being let off so lightly from the chastisement they merited.

This was the last public appearance of the "Septuagenarian Joan of Arc," but in such dread was she held by the disaffected that "long after her death the people trembled at the very name of the 'Great Countess.'"

On her homeward journey, and when within only a few miles of Canossa, she was overtaken by a return of the illness from which she had scarcely recovered ere her expedition to Mantua. When she reached the village of Bondeno, near Reggio, she resolved to make a prolonged stay, hoping that the health-inspiring air of the plains would restore her failing strength. She had a great wish to be spared for the consecration of the new church she was building, and which was dedicated to St James, for whom she had a special devotion. Alas! it was not to be. The hour of the "Great Countess" had come; Italy was to lose her brave defender, and the Church a pious and devoted child.

The Princess herself realised that her career was ended. No more should she behold Canossa, the cradle of her sires, each stone of which was endeared to her from past associations of her beloved parents and holy friends. "Her vigorous frame, nourished by simple living and hardened by a thousand fatigues and privations from which a veteran might have recoiled, was now," wails Donizo, "prostrated beyond all hope of rally."

Though endowed with a princely patrimony, Matilda had, throughout her life, denied to herself the comforts with which it was her pleasure to surround others. Notwithstanding that she lived in an age of unrestrained appetite, she observed a simplicity of diet that almost amounted to austerity, and daily at her well-spread table set an example

of self-mortification. Not even in illness did she allow to her body the ease which is not only at such times permissible but even desirable. When her attendants, we are told, attempted to place her pain-racked limbs in postures which would afford her some relief, she begged them to desist. Her Redeemer had for hours suffered the pain of a fixity of position in addition to His other agonies upon the cross, and Matilda desired to imitate her dear Lord. "How properly all the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount seemed, as it were, to belong to her," piously remarks the historian. "She had indeed broken her box of precious ointment and poured forth its fragrance at her Saviour's feet!"

During her illness, which lasted some months, she endeavoured to remain as long as possible in one posture—with hands meekly folded upon her breast, and with her eyes upon the crucifix—waiting until the Heavenly Father should call her to Himself. In the silent watches of the night she frequently beguiled the weary hours by calling to mind the poems of Prudentius, and often she murmured her favourite verse,—

> "This house of clay, once mansion of a soul,
> Brought into life by its Creator's breath,
> Wisdom did once this frame of flesh control
> And Christ therein enshrined did conquer death."

Matilda had enjoyed such perfect health all her life that her friends even now could hardly realise that she would go forth no more. The Pope, who had heard of her illness and had sent his apostolic blessing to the sufferer, was not aware that her end was so near, and at the very moment she passed away was projecting an early visit to Canossa. Thus she, who had for more than half a century been a support to Pascal and his predecessors, and who had left her possessions in trust for the Church, was not privileged to have the presence of the Pontiff to console her in her last agony.

The parting between the Countess and her subjects was a

great trial of her fortitude. She alone, however, remained calm amidst the weeping crowds who thronged her chamber, anxious for a word or smile from their lady. Donizo, whose trembling limbs could scarce support his feeble frame, endeavoured in vain to comfort himself by the assurance of soon joining his beloved princess.

The trying ordeal over, Matilda begged the venerable Bishop of Reggio, who was in constant attendance, to administer to her the sacrament of Extreme Unction, and with a tender smile upon her pallid lips composed herself for death.

The sorrowing Donizo, in tearful plaint, thus describes the last moments of his pupil and friend: "She kissed the crucifix, pronouncing these sublime words, 'Oh! thou whom I have served so well, serve me now!'"

So calmly ended the eventful life of Matilda that her friends, waiting to hear the parting words from her smiling lips, were unaware when the last moment came. Without a sigh or regret her pure soul winged its flight from the sunny land she loved so well to the eternal reward she merited.

Thus, on 8th July 1115, "followed by the prayers and blessings of a people for whom she had so often prayed and blessed," soared the spirit of the greatest and noblest woman of her age. "After a life which might seem to belong to the province of romance rather than history she died, bequeathing to the world a name second in the annals of her age to none but that of Hildebrand himself."[1] The saintly Gregory, whom she thus rivalled in historic interest and piety, had preceded her to the grave by thirty years. To that reverend Pontiff, the counsellor of her youth, she might have fitly addressed the words written in later days by a son of the Church whose interests she had so faithfully guarded:—

"Oh, while along the stream of life thy name
Expanded flies and gathers all its fame,

[1] *Ecclesiastical Biography.* Right Hon. Sir James Stephen.

Say, shall my little bark attendant sail,
Pursue the triumph and partake the gale?"[1]

The venerable Donizo, who had regretted the fact that Beatrice had not chosen Canossa for her last resting-place, was again "doomed to disappointment" on hearing that Matilda's body was not to be interred within the castle precincts. She left directions that her remains should be conveyed to the church of San Benedetto[2] de Polirone, attached to a monastery at Mantua which had been founded by her ancestors, and her wishes were carried out by her sorrowing friends.

Mantua, who, seduced by German gold and German influence, had twice fallen away from her loyalty, was overwhelmed with grief at the decease of the "Great Countess." The repentant citizens accused themselves of hastening the death of their patron and benefactress. The usual routine of pleasure or duty was abandoned, and every household was plunged into mourning. No more, wailed the stricken people, would Matilda be their champion in the day of distress, no more identify herself with their interests, no more encourage by her aid and influence the progress of their material and spiritual welfare!

The news that the "Great Countess" was to be buried within the walls of Mantua came like a message of forgiveness from the dead and filled the hearts of the citizens with a renewed love and reverence for the noble woman against whom they had rebelled.

On the day before her burial the remains of Matilda were conveyed from Bondeno to Mantua. All along the route and by the shores of the Mincio, the way was lined with people of all ranks who had come from distant parts of Tuscany to testify their respect to the last of the race of the princely Margraves. As the procession, touching in its simplicity,

[1] Alexander Pope, in his lines addressed to Lord Bolingbroke.
[2] Saint Benedict of Polirone.

passed through their midst, the weeping multitudes fell upon their knees, and with tears and groans gave utterance to their sorrow. At the approach of the *cortège* the gates of "La Gloriosa" were flung open and a procession, headed by the monks of St Benedict, went forth to escort the body of "the daughter of St Peter" to their monastery, where it remained hidden from mortal eyes for more than three hundred years. Amid the tears of her subjects, and with all the impressive ritual of the Catholic Church, she was laid to rest in an urn which was "supported by eight columns of marble."

In 1445, during the restoration of the monastery by a member of the house of Gonzaga, it was found necessary, we are told, to remove the body of Matilda. Her tomb was opened, and "Prince Guido gazed with awe upon the well-preserved features of the Great Countess." Her remains were allowed to rest undisturbed in the urn, which was removed to the chapel of St Justine.

On 22nd June 1613, during the pontificate of Paul V., the body of the princess was again exposed to view by "the curiosity of Ferdinand IV., Duke of Mantua." The features were still undecayed, and "struck the beholders by their beauty of outline. She appeared as though asleep, and through her partly-opened mouth could be seen her white and regular teeth, not one of which was missing." Her white hair was confined as during her life by a tiara, which was still intact, and which is familiar in her portrait upon a monument at Padua.

This was the last occasion on which mortal eye could trace the lineaments of the patriotic Matilda, for even while the beholders gazed upon her, the body, unable to withstand the exposure to air, began rapidly to crumble into dust.

For a third time, in 1635, more than five hundred years after her death, was the burial-place of the "Great Countess" changed, at this instance by the order of Urban VIII. The urn was not, however, opened, but translated, with due honour

to the illustrious dead, to Rome. Here beneath the mighty dome, the honour of which she had so zealously upheld, repose the remains of the "Great Countess."[1]

Within the Basilica itself Pope Urban has erected a splendid monument, upon which is engraved the name of,—

"COMITESSA MATHILDE."

Upon the marble sarcophagus is sculptured the scene of Henry's self-imposed penance at Canossa. The German King has thrown himself prostrate at the feet of the Pontiff he has personally insulted and who represents the Church, whose laws he has deliberately broken, and whose liberties he has ruthlessly trampled upon. The sculptor has depicted Matilda standing by the side of Gregory and pleading for her cousin, who so ill requited the Pontiff's forbearance and the successful mediation of his relative.

An inscription is appended, of which the following is a free translation, testifying to her virtues and concluding with his own name:—

"URBANUS VIII. PONT. MAX."[2]
"To the COUNTESS MATILDA.
A woman of bold spirit.
Protectress of the Apostolic See.
Most celebrated for her remarkable
liberality and kindness.
Her remains were transferred here
from the monastery of St Benedict in Mantua.
A woman worthy of eternal praise.
This monument was erected in the year 1635."

It was but just, remarks the chronicler, that the valuable aid rendered to the Holy See by the "Great Countess" should be publicly recognised, and that one of its Pontiffs should uphold her as a model of Christian courage and charity for

[1] *Hildebrand and His Times.* W. R. Stephens, M.A.

[2] "Commitissæ Mathildi. Virilis animi fœminæ. Sedis Apostolicæ propugnatrici pietate insigni liberalitate celiberrimæ huc ex Mantuano. Sancti Benedicti cœnobio translatis ossibus gratus æternæ laudis promeritum. Mon. pos. An. MDCXXXV."



to the illustrious dead to Rome. Here beneath the migh[ty] dome the honour of which she had so zealously upheld, rep[ose] the remains of the "Great Countess."[1]

Within the Basilica itself Pope Urban has erected [a] splendid monument, upon which is engraved the name of—

[illegible] sa Ma[illegible]

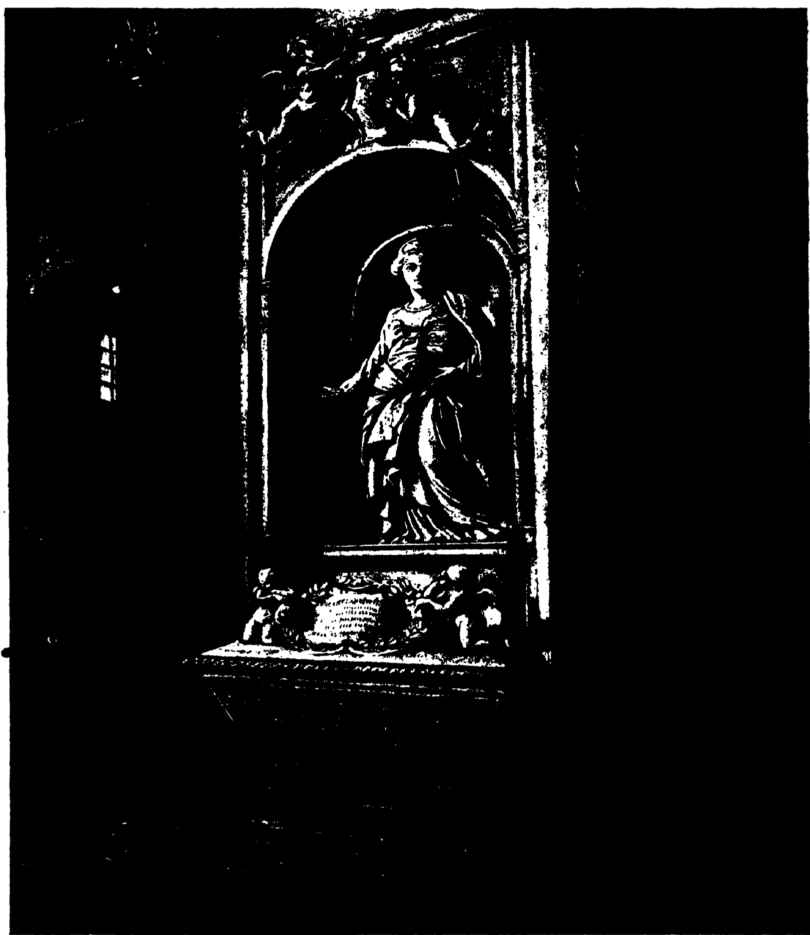
Upon the [illegible] [sar]cophagus is sculptured the scene [illegible] Henry's self imp[illegible] [illegible] at Canossa. The German Kin[g] has thrown himself [illegible] at the feet of the Pontiff [illegible] personally [illegible] [illegible] laws he has [illegible] [illegible] broken, and whose liberties he [illegible] [illegible] The sculptor has depic[ted] [illegible] of Canossa and pleading [illegible] [illegible] the Pontiff's [illegible] [illegible] of his relative.

[illegible] appended, of which the following is [a] free translation [illegible] to her virtue and conciliatory [illegible]

It was but just, remarks the chronicler, that the [illegible] aid rendered to the Holy See by the "Great Countess" sh[ould] be publicly recognized, and that one of its Pontiffs [should] uphold her as a model of Christian courage and charity.

[1] *Hildebrand and His Times*, W. R. W. Stephens, M.A.

[2] "Comitissae Mathildi [illegible] [illegible] Sedis Ap[ostolicae] propugnatrici [illegible] insigni liberalitate [illegible] ex Mant[ua] Sancti Benedicti [illegible] [illegible] gratus [illegible] promeritum. Mon. pos. An. MDCXXXV."



Art Repro Co.

Monument to Matilda
in St. Peter's, Rome.

the emulation of future ages. She had spent her years and her substance in the defence of the Church, and through girlhood, wedded life and widowhood had been the champion of its rights during the reigns of ten of its Pontiffs. This does not include the eighteen years' pontificate of Pascal, who survived her by only three years.

She lived to see the fruition of her labours—the independence of her country and the restoration of the temporal power to the Church. To this twofold object she gave her whole strength of mind and body, devoting herself with unfailing cheerfulness and unflinching courage to the task she had set herself, and which she successfully achieved.

Cimabue, the "father of modern painting," a native of Matilda's city of Florence, and the master and patron of Giotto, has immortalised her in his picture. She is there represented as "a virgin in martial array, whose face is half hidden by a veil, who holds the reins of a fiery steed in one hand, and in the other a pomegranate flower, the symbol of stainless purity." Another artist depicted her "on horseback, clad in a red robe, and holding in her hand the pomegranate, the emblem of her virginity."

We learn from a French writer that there is a picture of Matilda, bearing the name of Donizo, still preserved in the Vatican library.[1] The following is a free translation of the more detailed account, with which his graphic pen has furnished us: "Seated upon a green cushion, a lily in her hand, wearing a golden crown of a conical form, ornamented with pearls and precious stones, and wearing a white veil which falls over a blue robe, the sleeves of which are large, with red under-sleeves and bordered with gold. The mantle is red and ornamented with a wide border of gold, upon which were scattered pearls. Her shoes appear to be of cloth of gold."

Poets and musicians, in sounding her praises, have delighted in representing her "as a fair and gentle woman

[1] Renée Amédée. Paris, 1859.

singing hymns and gathering flowers," and claiming her as an example of all that is the embodiment of courage and virtue. The immortal Tasso, who lived in Florence, became acquainted with the traditions which had been handed down as family heirlooms during four centuries, and "which doubtless inspired him while meditating upon his verses."

But Matilda lived longest and best in the hearts of her people, more especially the poor, for whose happiness she laboured, and on whom she spent the greater part of her vast revenues. "So well," relates the historian, "was her munificence sustained by a wise economy that at the close of her long reign she was still able to maintain the appellation of 'The Rich,' by which her father, Boniface, had been distinguished."

To Donizo, the aged family chaplain, chronicler and poet, already himself tottering on the verge of the grave, Matilda's death was an irreparable loss. He had been with her from her infancy, he had instilled into her mind those sentiments of religion and patriotism for which she was pre-eminently remarkable, and he knew and appreciated the value of her sterling worth and piety.

At the news "that she was no more, the poet's heart was bruised," and he relieved his pent-up feelings by composing the following lamentation in verse:—

> "The summons came.
> I could not realise the Countess was dead!"
>
> . . . . . . .
>
> "My strength has left me,
> My sleep, sweet to me, has departed.
> All seems lost without her."

In the concluding words he uttered his last cry, which, like the notes of the dying swan, broke his faithful heart:—

> "The honour and glory of Italy
> Descended with thee into the tomb.
> O Matilda! O Great Countess!"

# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

| | |
|---|---|
| Hildebrand, Gregory VII., born | 1013 |
| Henry III. of Germany crowned Emperor | 1046 |
| Matilda, Countess of Tuscany, born | 1046 |
| Leo IX., Count of Hapsburg, Pope | 1049 |
| Boniface, Margrave of Tuscany, died | 1054 |
| Beatrice marries Godfrey of Lotharingia | 1054 |
| Beatrice and Matilda prisoners in Germany | 1054 |
| Leo IX. died 19th April | 1054 |
| Beatrice and Matilda return to Italy | 1055 |
| Victor II., Bishop Gebehard, Pope | 1055 |
| Hildebrand Legate to France | 1056 |
| Henry III., Emperor of Germany, died | 1056 |
| Victor II. died 28th July | 1057 |
| Stephen IX., Frederic of Lorraine, Pope | 1057 |
| Benedict X., Conti, anti-pope | 1058 |
| Nicholas II., Bishop Gerard, Pope | 1058 |
| General Council at Rome | 1059 |
| Nicholas II. died 27th July | 1061 |
| Alexander II., Anselm Badagius, Pope | 1061 |
| Cadalous, Bishop of Parma, anti-pope | 1061 |
| Matilda's first battle | 1061 |
| Matilda's second battle | 1061 |
| Matilda marries Godfrey le Bossu | 1061 |
| Empress of Germany retires to Rome | 1062 |
| Henry IV. married to Bertha | 1065 |
| Alexander II. died 21st April | 1073 |
| Gregory VII., Hildebrand, Pope | 1074 |
| Godfrey of Lotharingia died | 1074 |
| Council at Rome | 1074 |
| ,, | 1075 |
| Cenci's attack on Gregory VII. | 1075 |
| Henry IV. excommunicated | 1076 |
| Godfrey le Bossu died | 1076 |
| Beatrice died | 1076 |
| Saxon rebellion | 1076 |
| Henry at Canossa, January | 1077 |
| Matilda's bequest | 1077 |
| Saxons elect Rudolph | 1077 |
| Death of Empress of Germany | 1080 |
| Gregory VII. sends crown to Rudolph | 1080 |
| Death of Rudolph | 1080 |
| Guibert, Bishop of Ravenna, anti-pope | 1080 |
| Excommunication of Henry confirmed | 1080 |
| Henry invades Italy | 1081 |
| Matilda retreats to Canossa | 1081 |
| Henry invests Canossa | 1081 |
| Henry lays siege (two years) to Rome | 1081 |
| Gregory's last Council in Rome | 1084 |
| Gregory retires to St Angelo | 1084 |
| Henry enters Rome | 1084 |
| Guibert, anti-pope, as Clement III. | 1084 |
| Henry invests St Angelo | 1084 |
| Robert Guiscard rescues Gregory | 1084 |
| Gregory goes to Salerno | 1084 |
| Henry crowned by anti-pope | 1084 |
| Henry sends army to Tuscany | 1084 |
| Matilda defeats imperial troops | 1085 |
| Gregory dies at Salerno, 23rd May | 1085 |
| Death of Robert Guiscard, 17th July | 1085 |
| Victor III., Cardinal Desiderius, Pope | 1086 |
| Saxon revolt | 1086 |

# Chronological Table

| | |
|---|---|
| Urban II., Cardinal Otto, Pope | 1088 |
| Matilda marries Welf, Duke of Bavaria | 1090 |
| Henry invades Italy | 1090 |
| Urban quits Rome | 1090 |
| Revolt of Conrad of Germany | 1091 |
| Crusades | 1095 |
| Urban dies 29th July | 1099 |
| Prince Henry crowned | 1099 |
| Pascal II., Cardinal Renier, Pope | 1099 |
| Henry's last invasion of Italy | 1101 |
| Insurrection of Prince Henry | 1104 |
| Henry IV. dies in exile 7th August | 1106 |
| Henry V. threatens invasion of Rome | 1106 |
| Flight of Pascal to France | 1106 |
| Pascal returns to Rome | 1108 |
| Henry enters Rome | 1109 |
| Pascal imprisoned Feb. to April | 1109 |
| Henry V. crowned Emperor | 110[illegible] |
| Emperor visits Matilda | 1109 |
| Matilda's subjects in revolt | 1114 |
| Death of Matilda, July 8th | 1115 |
| Matilda's body removed to St Peter's | 1635 |

## CONTEMPORARY SOVEREIGNS

| *England* | *France* | *Germany* |
|---|---|---|
| William I. 1066 | Philip I. 1060 | Emperor Henry III. |
| William II. 1087 | | King Henry IV. 1056 |
| | | Emperor Henry V. 1106 |

## POPES

| | |
|---|---|
| Clement | 1046 |
| Damasus | 1048 |
| Leo IX. | 1049 |
| Victor II. | 1055 |
| Stephen IX. | 1057 |
| Benedict X. | 1058 |
| Nicholas II. | 1058 |
| Alexander II. | 1061 |
| Gregory VII. | 1073 |
| Victor III. | 1088 |
| Urban II. | 1088 |

Pascal II. survived Matilda by three years.

# INDEX

# Index

# Index

# Index

# Index

# Index

# Index

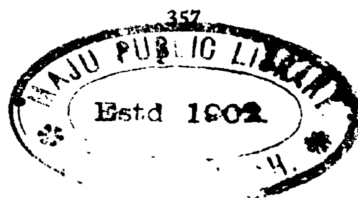
# Index

# Index

# Index







EDINBURGH
COLSTON AND COY. LIMITED
PRINTERS